

# THE INDEPENDENT

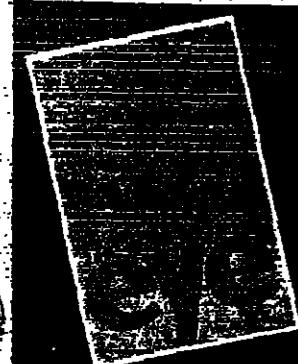
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SATURDAY 23 NOVEMBER 1996

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## The Eye

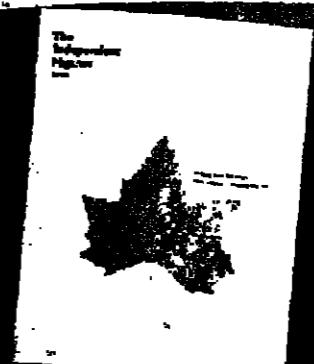
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The best for arts  
and entertainment

## The Long Weekend

Where to go  
Where to shop  
Where to be

## The Magazine

How to buy a  
great work of  
art for £30



# Clarke could slash tax by 3p

Diane Coyle and Colin Brown

larger tax cuts than the state of the economy justifies.

Steven Bell, chief economist at investment bank Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, said: "If the Chancellor can now keep the financial markets happy by forecasting lower government borrowing and reduce taxes by 24p or 25p, there is no earthly reason he will not do it ahead of the election."

A tax-cutting budget would prove the tonic the Government desperately needs to lift the shaken morale of Tory backbenchers, who were threatening renewed rebellion over Europe.

But senior party figures cautioned against an over-generous give-away, which could turn sour if it led to inflation and increased interest rates before the election. "There have been a series of warnings on monetary aggregates and the increasing buoyancy of the housing market which should be heeded by the Chancellor," said one former Cabinet minister.

A ministerial source said the Chancellor was likely to concentrate on reducing the increasing debt burden, which had worried the City. But party sources are expecting an "incentive" Budget by the

Chancellor, an astute politician, who recognises it could be the Tories' last throw of the dice before the election.

The City economists calculate that better-than-forecast growth in tax revenues this year will last, giving the Government an extra £6-8bn to split between bigger reductions in tax and a lower forecast for the public sector borrowing requirement, without having to cut spending plans very much at all.

"He will be able to achieve all three things simultaneously," said Adam Cole, an economist at brokers James Capel.

According to Mr Cole, if revenues kept up the same pace for the rest of this financial year,

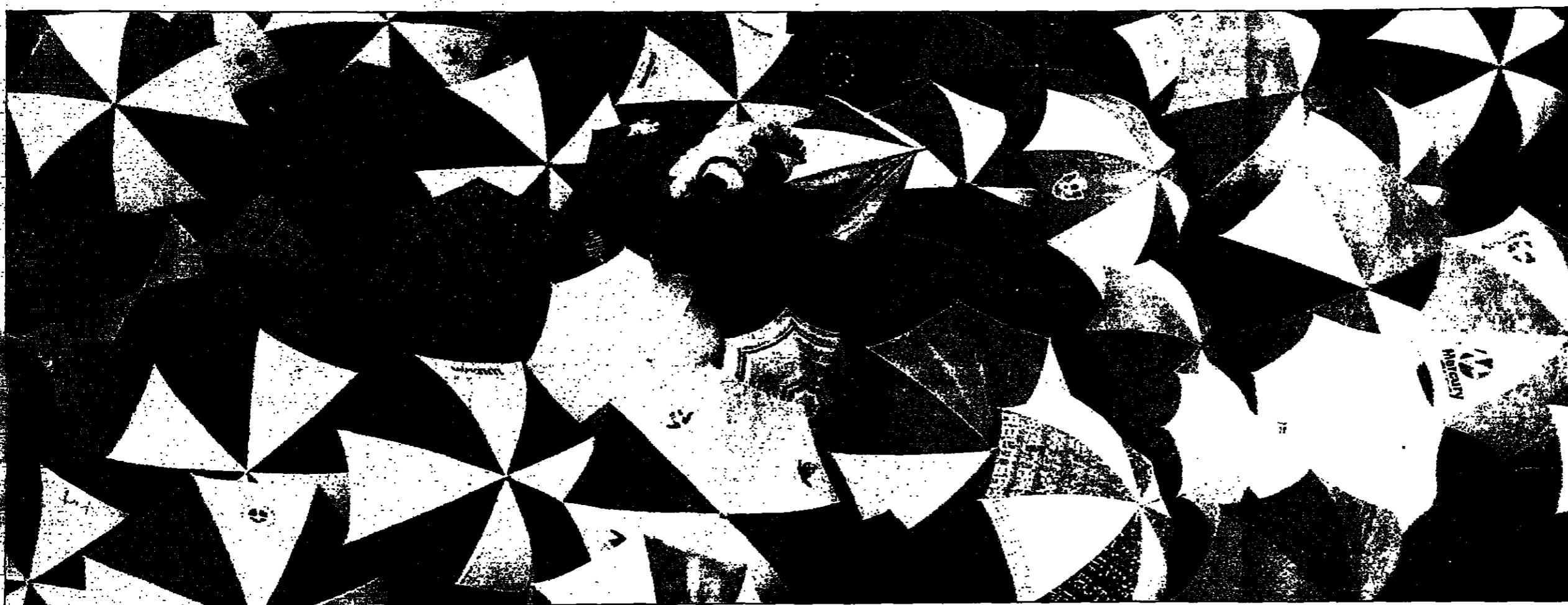
government borrowing could end up more than £5bn under its £27bn target.

Kevin Durlington at brokers Hoare Govett said Mr Clarke could credibly have an extra £6bn next financial year, all of it available for tax cuts if he stuck to the same borrowing forecast as before. That would allow for 3 pence off the basic rate of income tax, although he thought a combination of smaller tax cuts and reduced borrowing more likely.

Most analysts had, until this week, been predicting that the Chancellor could trim at most £2-3bn off taxes.

None of the City experts think that he should put more money in consumers' pockets, however. All put the unexpected upturn in the state of the Government's books down to the strong pick-up in spending, and argue that it should be used to get the public finances into better shape.

"The worst decision that can be taken at this stage of the cycle is to allow consumers to share in the benefits of an unexpectedly large reduction in the budget deficit," said Mr Jeffrey. That had been Nigel Lawson's mistake in the late 1980s, he said.



Good golly, my brolly: Martin Allen of North London Railways dressed as a clown to help sort out hundreds of umbrellas from Railtrack's lost property for sale yesterday at Euston station in aid of Children in Need. Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

## Liberals revolt over coalition fear

Colin Brown  
Chief Political Correspondent

Paddy Ashdown is facing a grassroots revolt led by one of his own MPs against a Liberal-Democratic coalition with New Labour because they fear a sell-out of principles seen in a Cabinet under Tony Blair.

Elizabeth Lynne, the Liberal-Democratic MP for Rochdale, and 16 senior Liberal-Democratic local council leaders and parliamentary candidates, wrote to Mr Ashdown yesterday to protest at the direction the party was taking under his leadership.

In the letter which *The In-*

*dependent* has obtained, Ms Lynne says: "We need assurances that the party is not going to be sold out for a handful of Cabinet seats. If this were to be the case you certainly would not have our support on it. We are an independent party and must remain so."

Ms Lynne told *The Independent* that she believed many Liberal-Democratic MPs shared her concern about the close co-operation with the Labour Party. But leadership sources made it clear that the Liberal-Democratic leader is determined to carry on with the strategy, which could have a crucial bearing on the outcome of the general election.

"We understand their concern but they are a small minority of people who are isolated," one source said. Mr Ashdown will tell the dissidents that the party endorsed his strategy by ending "equidistance" between Tory and Labour at its party conference in 1995.

The extraordinary frankness of the letter will astonish the Liberal-Democratic opponents but Mr Ashdown's aides said there were no plans to discipline Ms Lynne.

The letter said: "We are totally opposed to any pact or coalition with Labour before or after the next general election and feel that this is in actual fact

what you are working towards. "We don't believe that you will be able to carry the party and it will lead to inevitable splits which could irreparably damage the Liberal Democrats."

The focus for their unrest is the joint commission on constitutional reform headed by Robin Cook, Labour's Shadow Foreign Secretary, and the Liberal-Democrats' Robert Maclean, which is preparing plans for an incoming Labour government to deliver Scottish and Welsh devolution, reform of the House of Lords, and possible voting reform for the Commons.

Ms Lynne, an outspoken crit-

ic of closer links with Labour at local council level, said joint initiatives on constitutional reform and other issues were seen as a "Lib-Lab pact. We believe there should be no more joint press conferences on this or anything else ... We need to have more statements about our distinctive policies and we should be attacking the Government and Labour on key issues."

Leading party members who signed the letter included Ashley Byrne, a member of the party's federal executive, Ron Marshall, the Liberal-Democratic mayor of Preston, and councillor Peter Moore, leader of the Liberal Democrats in Sheffield.

**QUICKLY**  
Thatcher to rescue  
Baroness Thatcher called on the Euro-sceptic wing of the Tory Party to turn its attacks outwards and on to Tony Blair over Europe, rather than on to the Prime Minister. Page 2

**Miss World anger**  
Thousands of security guards have been recruited to stop disruption of the Miss World contest in Bangalore. Angry feminists have pledged to set fire to themselves. Page 11

**BMA opposes Blood**  
The BMA ethics committee urged that Diane Blood's plea to use her dead husband's sperm be rejected. Page 3

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## news

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## significant shorts

## Driving ban for Princess of Wales's mother

Frances Shand Kydd, mother of the Princess of Wales, was banned from driving for a year and fined £400 yesterday after being found guilty of drink-driving.

Shand Kydd, 66, had more than two-and-a-half times the legal limit of alcohol in her blood when she was stopped in Shore Street, Oban, on 5 April. She had denied the charge. She was acquitted of failing to give a roadside breath test without reasonable cause, after a three-day trial at Oban Sheriff Court.

Sheriff William Dunlop told her that in giving her only the minimum ban, he was taking into account an unblemished 42-year driving record and "that a loss of a licence can mean more to some people than others". Shand Kydd had been upset by a letter on the day of her arrest, the court heard.

## Death school boy detained

A 13-year-old boy was ordered to be detained for three years at the Old Bailey for his part in the violence which led to the death of the headmaster Philip Lawrence.

A trivial incident of baring between Christopher Gan and another boy in a corridor at Mr Lawrence's school, St George's, Maidstone, north London, led to a feud and Gan, a Filipino, threatened to take his friends to beat up the other boy.

A gang later attacked the boy. Mr Lawrence was stabbed to death by the gang leader, Learco Chindamo, when he went to help the victim. Gan was convicted of conspiring to cause grievous bodily harm.

## M25 pile-up

One person died and seven others were seriously injured in a pile-up on the M25 in Surrey.

## THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD

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 Belgium ... BP40 Irla ... L1.500  
 Canaries ... P5.300 Mexico ... E52.25  
 Costa Rica ... C51.20 Malta ... 49.25  
 Denmark ... DK18 Norway ... 24.20  
 Iran ... P5.45 Portugal ... E52.00  
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The former Prime Minister tells Tory rebels to reject Blair and says socialism is 'visibly stirring'

## Thatcher warns Euro-sceptics

Colin Brown  
 Chief Political Correspondent

Baroness Thatcher last night rode to the rescue of the embattled Prime Minister by calling on the Euro-sceptic right wing to turn their attacks on Tony Blair over Europe.

The Prime Minister was threatened with a Government defeat by Labour and the Eurosceptics over European Commission proposals which could undermine Britain's opt-out from the European single currency.

A row is expected in the Commons on Monday when MPs return to the House, threatening disruption of the Budget debate on Tuesday. Downing Street made it clear yesterday Mr Major was standing firm and refusing to allow an emergency debate before the Chancellor goes to the meeting of European finance ministers (Ecofin) on 2 December.

Almost six years to the day since she was challenged in the leadership election, Lady Thatcher told the Eurosceptics, many of whom were her natural supporters, to reject Mr Blair's overtures and back Mr Major.

In a withering attack on Mr Blair, Lady Thatcher used the rhetoric of the Cold War warrior to deliver her warning to the Tory Party that socialism was not dead, but only sleeping, and would re-awaken if they gave it the chance by bringing down the Government.

Praising Mr Major for showing "persistence, imagination and skill" in taking forward her brand of Conservatism, Lady Thatcher said the Prime Minister had gained exemptions from the social chapter which Mr Blair would sign up to.

She rejected the Labour leader's admiration for her leadership. "It is flattering to learn that we are all Thatcherites now. In fact, the Road to Damascus has never been more congested..."

Mr Blair did not understand the philosophy behind her policies and could not put them into practice. "They would be blown off course, and the reefs of interventionism are no less dangerous, and the sirens of financial profligacy no less alluring, than they were in the past," she said.

"We have to appreciate the fact that socialism is not dead. It is not even asleep. It is visibly stirring." Significantly, the only other minister singled out for praise was the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, seen by many as the leading right-wing candidate for the leadership.

Her remarks in a long-planned lecture in memory of Sir Nicholas Ridley, one of her

supporters, are unlikely to damp down the full-scale revolt among Tory MPs.

Teresa Gorman, the Eurosceptic Tory MP, said the Tory MPs were upset because they "smell a rat" about the possibility of the Chancellor agreeing to measures at the Ecofin meeting. They are demanding a debate before the end of next week. Labour helped to

whip up the expectations of a Government defeat by warning that it will seek to defeat the Government on the technical motion passing the documents from the European Commission which have caused the row.

The reports of the possibility that the Government could be brought down caused alarm bells to ring in Dublin, where ministers are both preparing for

the December summit as presidents of the European Union and trying to stop the Northern Ireland peace talks collapsing.

In spite of the threats by Northampton North MP Tony Marlow, a Tory Eurosceptic, to resign the whip, Tony Blair, the Labour leader, said he would not table a no-confidence motion on the Government until he believed Labour could win

it. Labour yesterday viewed that prospect as highly unlikely. But it could change if early by-elections in Barnsley East and Wirral South rob Mr Major of his majority.

The former chancellor and leading Eurosceptic Norman Lamont said extending the debate before the Dublin summit to two days could provide a way out of the current impasse pro-

vided there was a proper discussion of the documents.

"I think in the interests of maintaining the unity of the Conservative Party in the run-up to the election, I really do think and I would plead with the Government, that it is essential that we do have a debate on something which is very important," he said on BBC radio.

John Redwood, the former leadership challenger, told a meeting in King's Lynn: "Parliament won the right to hold the executive to account more than three hundred years ago in the Civil War... I urge the Prime Minister to recognise the strength of Parliamentary feeling."

Mr Major, who spent the day in his home in Huntingdon preparing a speech for next week's Tory Party women's conference, will meet Sir Marcus Fox, the chairman of the 1922 Committee of Tory MPs early next week to hear their concerns about the Government's string of blunders.

A month is a very long time in politics: countdown to the end of 17 years of Tory rule?

## Key dates for the crisis facing the Government

Tuesday 26 November - Chancellor's Budget statement

2 December - European finance ministers (Ecofin) attended by Kenneth Clarke

3 December - vote at the end of the Budget debate

December 4/5 - possible date for Government European debate on the 'adjournment of the House'.

December 12 - John Major's one-seat majority could be wiped out if Labour wins the Bamsley East by-election

December 13-14 - Dublin summit. Major has to defend Britain's opt-out on the single currency.

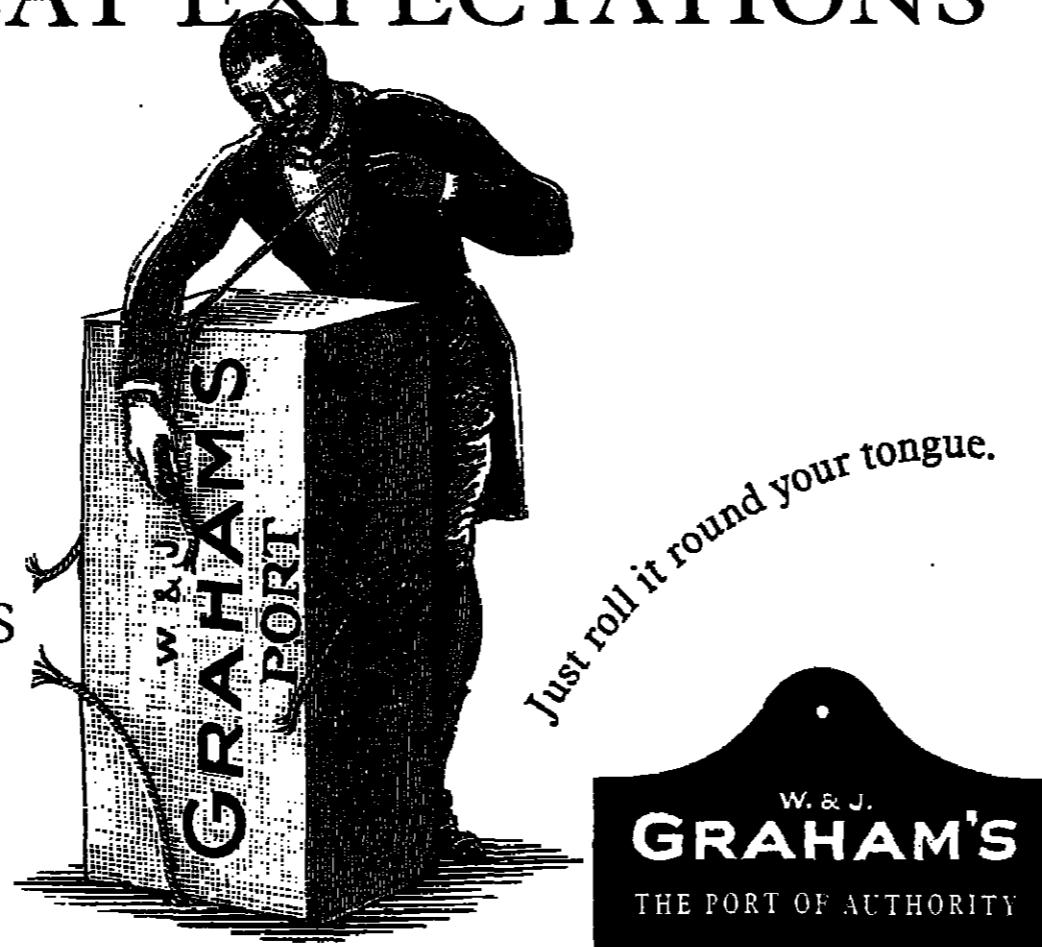
December 16-17 - European agriculture ministers' meeting - possible beef deal for Ulster farmers.

December 19? - possible date for Tory Wirral South by-election - defeat would put the Tories in a minority for the first time since 1979.

December 26 - Boxing Day; The Sun says it could be election day; even the Euro-sceptics dismissed such speculation as 'extravagant'.

## GRRREAT EXPECTATIONS

GRRRAHAM'S  
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## Keats exam is not a thing of beauty

Judith Judd  
 Education Editor

Three senior English examiners have resigned because they believe new exam rules are completely unsuitable for marking questions on Keats' concept of beauty.

Another eight examiners say they have been effectively suspended by an exam board until they agree to sign an agreement to comply with the new code of practice.

The protesters, all examiners for the Oxford and Cambridge Schools Examination Board which sets exams for many of the top public schools, say that the rules penalise gifted candidates who show originality and flair.

They are also concerned that the exam will be unfair because fewer individual scripts will be seen by examiners.

A meeting of the eight due to take place last weekend to set next year's English exam was cancelled by the board.

Government exam advisers from the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority and inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education are un-

derstood to have attacked the marking of this year's English A-level by the rebellious 11 because they failed to follow the revised code of practice.

Dr John Saunders, chief examiner in English, who has resigned, said the code assumed that English was "something of a science", that it was possible to give a "right" mark in English and that examiners could be programmed so that they would agree on a right mark.

Instead, he said, even well-trained examiners were likely to disagree by up to 5 per cent on their marks for most essays and by up to 25 per cent or more on essays which are unfamiliar in form and attitude.

He added that brilliant candidates from schools such as Winchester who wrote very short answers would be penalised under the system. The examiners argue that different subjects need different code.

Dr Brian Martin, one of the eight who has not resigned, said: "How can the same code of practice be applied to marking a physics exam and to marking a literature exam, for example the marking a question which asks about Keats' concept of beauty in his poetry and to a question about velocity, co-ordinates and vectors?"

The dispute has been further complicated by the ruling that the papers in the board's summer English literature A-Level should be marked as four modules or separate components, even though most candidates thought they were taking a traditional course with one final exam.

Dr Saunders and his colleagues felt that this was unfair on other candidates who tend to do better on non-modular courses.

The exam board secretary, said in a letter to one of the examiners: "I cannot accept that advanced level English cannot be examined in accordance with the code of practice, nor least because all the other GCSE exam boards do this."

A spokesman for the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority said: "All the boards have signed up to the code of practice. We are not aware that there is any problem with any aspect of the code of practice. We absolutely reject the examiners' reasons for their actions."

Leading article, page 21

The Germans left behind more than a few concrete bunkers in the Channel Islands, writes Jojo Moyes

## How Jersey's Nazi children disappeared

*Mrs L was charged with having, on April 5, given birth to a child, sex unknown, and with having criminally concealed the body in a kitchen stove ... The accused's husband, who was serving in HM forces, was now in Italy. The accused had not heard from her husband for 16 months but had written to her husband giving full details of the affair.*

*The Jersey Evening Post, 6 June 1945*

The Westway Crèche was once a prominent feature in the neatly manicured streets of St Helier, Jersey. But there are no references to it in the public library, and the trust that ran it is now chiefly remembered as a donor of children's shoes. The crèche, like the children it once housed, has become part of Jersey's unspoken, and controversial history.

Records released this week by the Public Records Office suggest that as many as 900 half-German babies were born to Jersey women during the occupation. The fierce denials of this fact in Jersey show that 50 years on, some wounds have not yet healed.

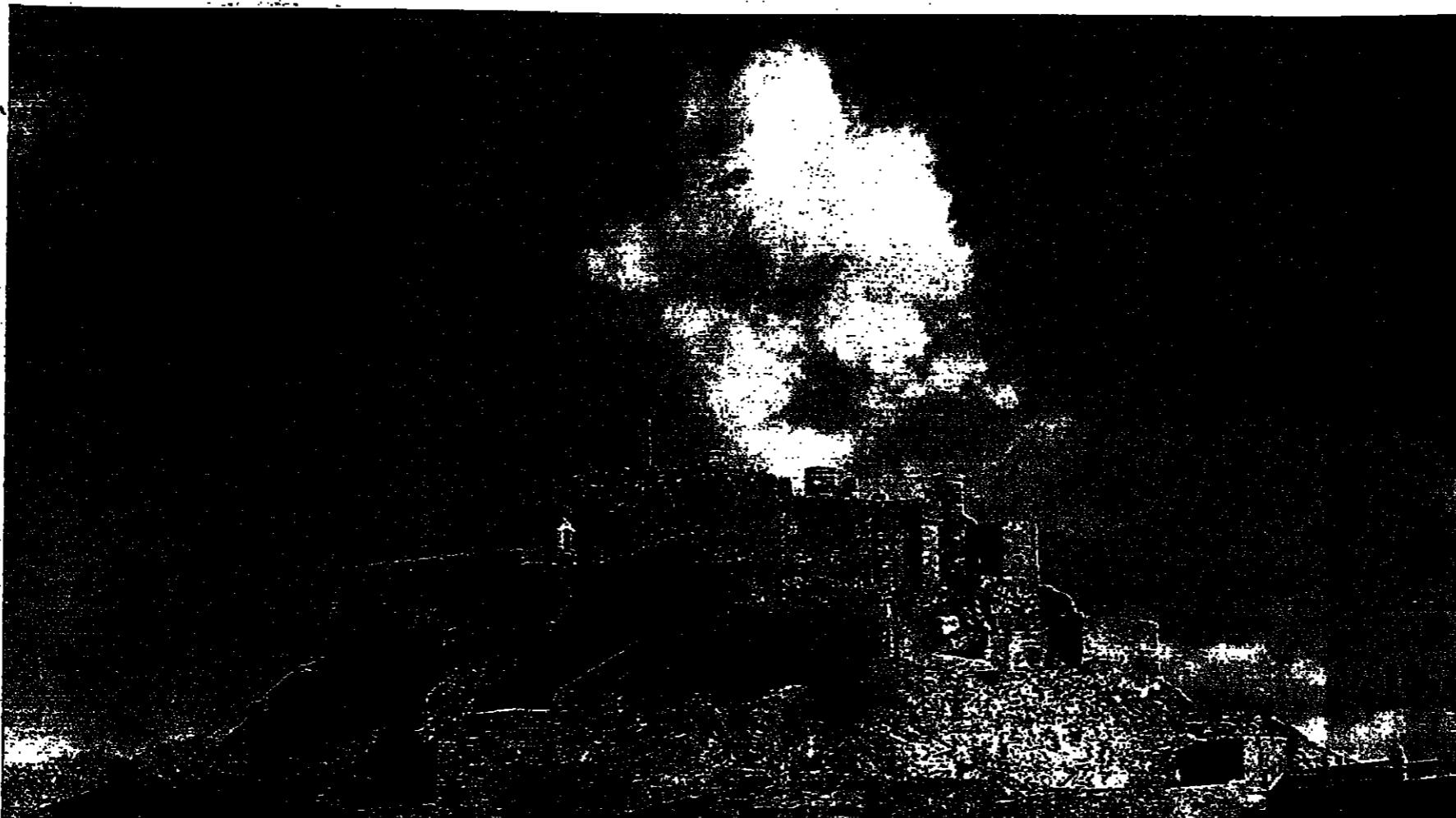
The children themselves - the only people who could shed light on the true figure - are unlikely to answer. They have "disappeared", or are carefully protected by the few remaining people who know their parentage.

Many residents who are old enough to remember will tell you that such children were their neighbours, or at their school. But they will not tell you their names. Most will tell you that the issue "should be left well alone".

One local reporter who has covered occupation stories for many years said it was not something she would pursue strongly. "We have to live here, don't we?"

She complained that the new illegitimacy figures, which largely comprised the evidence of anonymous informers, had been given a "quasi-credibility". Jersey residents say 900 are "ridiculous" and cite a figure of 174 birth for whole occupation period.

But census reports for the island show that while the annual birth rate dropped dramatically from the 70s



Island fortress: castles like Mont Orgueil on the Jersey coast kept Napoleon's forces at bay but were no defence against the Nazis

Photograph: Robert

to the 40s at the start of the war, it began to creep up during the German occupation. In 1944 it reached 527.

So where are the children, most of whom would now be in middle-age? Anne Herod, of the Jersey's Children's Department, said the lack of an adoption law until 1947 left the fate of many of the children undocumented. While many began life in the Westway Crèche - the newly-released papers refer to it as being "full up with those little bastards" - access to their files is restricted, as many of the people are

still alive.

"Many of them grew up with other families or may have been subsequently adopted. I think on the whole the children were assimilated," she said.

Under Jersey law, any child born to a married woman had to be registered as her husband's. Unmarried women simply left the name of the father blank. In many cases, she said, the child was unlikely to know of its German heritage. The only clue, "one or two with rather Aryan Christian names," she said.

Joe Miére, former curator of the German Underground Hospital Museum, is widely considered to be the island's "occupation expert". He is still in touch with some women who had babies by German soldiers, many of whom left the island after the liberation. In one case, he has met the child, now a middle-aged man. But he says of the women: "They talk to me because they know I won't give their names away."

The issue of "Jerrybags" - local women who slept with Germans - is still guaranteed to heighten feelings. James McSweeney, curator of the Underground Museum, said he had

wept tears of anger at the latest "exaggerated" claims that most Jersey women slept with Germans.

"This 70 percent thing - it's an insult to our sisters and mothers. And so what if they had? It's not as if the British army didn't do the same wherever they were."

One woman who fell in love with a Nazi deserter, still, at age 70, declines to be named publicly. "Alice" is now married with children and still lives in Jersey. Joe Miére was held in a cell next to the German soldier and remembers her waving a "grub by white handkerchief" as he was led

off for execution.

Alice's own death sentence was committed to 10 years imprisonment.

The Balliff's plea on her behalf reads: "A young woman in love does not always weigh the consequences of her deeds when they are decided by what she believes - however wrongly - to be the welfare of her lover."

But many Jersey residents were not as understanding. Mr Miére remembers seeing mobs chasing a naked and bleeding "Jerrybag" through the street. Others were simply ostracised.

### Plan to make master race

**Jojo Moyes and Elizabeth Wine**

Children born during the Nazi occupation of the Channel Islands narrowly escaped being transported to Germany as part of a programme to produce a master race, historian has claimed.

Joe Miére, former curator of Jersey's German Underground Hospital, says that documents from sources across Europe show that a unit from an elite SS squad visited shortly before D-Day to assess the "facial suitability" of 80 children born illegitimately to Jersey mothers.

The visit was part of the Lebensborn programme initiated by Heinrich Himmler, which produced some 7,500 children. Officers were ordered to father "perfect Aryans" in special Lebensborn homes, while in occupied countries suitable children were stolen to improve future blood stocks.

Documents dated 24 May 1944 addressed to the RSHA (racial unit) headquarters in Berlin state: "Since the occupation of the Channel Islands by German forces, 80 children have been born whose fathers are unquestionably members of the German occupying forces ... The situation of these unmarried mothers is very bad indeed."

Mr Miére, who has studied the occupation for more than 50 years, said many mothers did in fact move to Germany.

Michael Leaman, co-author of the book *Master Race*, about the Lebensborn programme, said that even at the late stage of the war, the Nazis were still being selective. "Because Himmler admired British stock the Germans were looking to increase their population by taking illegitimate children fathered by German soldiers. Whether these children had a lucky escape or not I don't know."

## BMA urged ban on use of dead husband's sperm

**Patricia Wynn Davies**  
Legal Affairs Editor

The British Medical Association's ethics committee urged the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority to reject Diane Blood's bid to have a baby using her dead husband's sperm, it emerged yesterday.

In an unsolicited letter to the authority's chairwoman, Ruth Ditch, prior to Thursday night's decision to confirm the ban on the treatment either here or abroad, the committee's chairman, Dr Stuart Horner, suggested that Stephen Blood, the husband, had not properly thought through the full implications of a child being created after his death.

Mrs Blood has claimed throughout that the legal requirement for written consent - preceded by an opportunity for counselling - had been applied too inflexibly in her case because she and her husband had previously discussed artificial insemination after death.

But giving its reasons for refusing to use its discretionary powers last night, the authority said in a statement: "There is a clear requirement for the written and effective consent of a man after he has had the opportunity to receive counselling and after he has had a proper opportunity to consider the implications of a posthumous birth."

Dr Horner's letter, dated



Diane Blood: 'Very, very upset' over the contents of the BMA ethics committee letter to the HFEA

country, it was equally unacceptable for it to be used abroad.

Paul Plant, co-ordinator of the Stephen Blood Baby Appeal, said: "Diane is disgusted and very upset about these comments. This gentleman is doubting ... her evidence. He should have ensured he was in possession of all the facts."

Mrs Blood was facing a fresh crisis yesterday as her supporters said that £50,000, in addition to £15,000 already received in donations, was urgently needed for a court appeal in January.

The authority confirmed that the frozen sperm, now 18 months old but with a shelf-life of 30 years, would continue to be safely stored until all legal avenues had been exhausted.

The fertility expert Lord Winston, a Labour peer, introduced a backbench bill this week to amend the law - but this is unlikely to make progress within the life of this parliament without Government backing. He said yesterday that ethics were never fixed and the BMA committee had "let Mrs Blood down".

Professor Jack Scarisbrick, chairman of the anti-abortion group Life, said: "Many will sympathise with Mrs Blood. But children should not be used as a way of coping with bereavement or honouring a dead spouse."

The Stephen Blood Baby Appeal can be contacted on 0121-643 4636.



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**Ian Burrell**

Parents and sports teachers are alarmed that professional rugby clubs are approaching children as young as 12 with written contracts.

Swept along by the new pressures of the professional game, clubs are trying to spot the burgeoning boys who will grow up to scrub down like Brian Moore or tackle the next Jonah Lomu.

Schoolboys are being offered a free kit, medical insurance, and promised sponsored university places - and payments of £500 a game. Teachers believe youngsters are being tempted to jettison their studies and long-term careers.

The trend has resulted from the arrival of professionalism in

rugby union along with the setting up of the new Super League in Rugby League.

The two codes are involved in a race to sign up new schoolboy talent. Children must sign contracts promising not to play without the permission of the clubs.

Senior rugby players warned last night that salaries in the game were only a fraction of those paid to top soccer players and could not provide long-term financial security.

Richard Moon, secretary of the Rugby Union Players' Association (Rupa), said: "We have been approached by quite a few parents and schoolteachers. In some cases the clubs have been offering the entire school 15 centres to join. Clubs are tar-

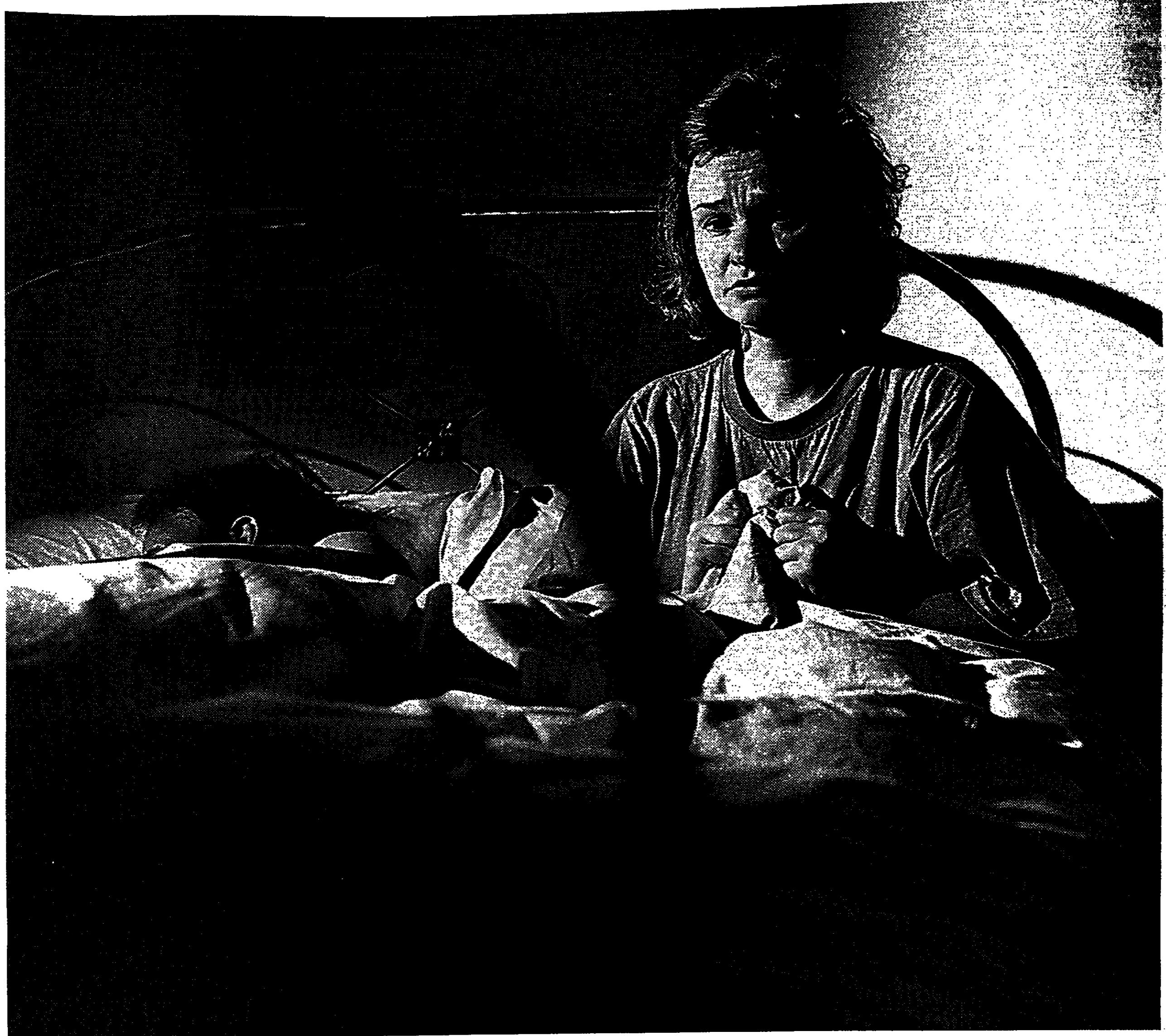
getting them at a young age so that they don't slip out of their grasp, but schoolchildren are potentially so vulnerable and they may see stars in their eyes and follow that path to the exclusion of all else."

Rupa has shared its fears about schoolboy contracts with the Rugby Football Union, based at Twickenham, where England begin their international season against Italy today.

David Rose, the RFU's youth development officer for the North Midlands, is also concerned. He said: "Clubs said 12-year-olds were now being signed up to major clubs."

"If a schoolboy is not signed by the age of 14 they might see themselves as a failure and lose interest in the game," he said.

"Many parents are very concerned, but some dads, who are



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PHOTOGRAPH BY MAX ROSE

THE INDEP

Capital classics

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Louise Jury

A plan to give more powers to the streets of the cap promised by the oughts to boost the film industry.

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A Bill being pres- tment them the right to suspend parking in

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Louise Jury

James Bond has been Britain after swift u- ners, film-makers found for the legendary

The production of eighteenth- adver- secret agent 007 in the 12-acre site in H on Tuesday.

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Bond film producer

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Barbara Broccoli

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Capital classics: (Left to right) *The Ladykillers* (1955), an Ealing comedy starring Alec Guinness; *Alfie* (1966) with Michael Caine as a Cockney rogue; and *Mrs Dalloway*, yet to be released. All were shot in Camden, north London

## London calling for the world's film-makers

Louise Jury

A plan to give movie-makers more powers to film on the streets of the capital is being promoted by the London boroughs to boost the burgeoning film industry.

In a radical reversal of London's notorious reputation for being uncooperative, the proposals would give legal backing for the first time to councils who want to help film crews.

A Bill being presented to Parliament this month would give them the right to close roads, suspend parking bays and take

other measures on the streets as necessary in return for a "reasonable" fee.

The London Film Commission, which is backing the plans, believes that formalising arrangements which are already widespread will make the capital even more attractive as a location.

In the past, while many boroughs have worked hard to be flexible, some have proved cautious because of the risk of legal action by disgruntled

residents or businesses. However, some film-makers are already anxious that giving councils the right to charge will add to costs and force productions to go elsewhere.

The measures are part of the London Local Authorities Bill, a private Bill promoted by the Association of London Government (ALG).

It will be presented to Parliament at the end of the month, but is likely to take up to two years to become law.

Ian Kenting, the ALG's parliamentary officer, said the measures were not a way for councils to make money, but would help all concerned.

"It will give boroughs an incentive to take trouble to help, and it will require people to give notice if they're going to film, even if they're not going to do something like close a road."

Chris Waterman, the ALG's arts officer, added: "What we're trying to do is make sure that London is film-friendly."

Warner Brothers have new studios planned for Hillingdon, west London, Mr Waterman said. There was also the possibility of another studio at the Arsenal in Woolwich, south-east London, and the new Star Wars trilogy is being made at the Leavesden former aerodrome site in Hertfordshire. He added: "We want to help provide the infrastructure for these studios."

Christabel Albery, of the London Film Commission, said: "Virtually all boroughs were

charging anyway, but what this Bill does is make these charges reasonable. A reasonable charge is one that covers the cost of what the borough has done, like rubbish collection. This is more an enabling piece of legislation than regulatory legislation."

But John Hardy, who acts as a consultant for film-makers, said: "Everyone has as much right to be on the highway as anyone else provided they don't cause a nuisance and hazard. No

other business – British Gas Telecom – is charged just for being there."

"Paying will be a retrograde step. At the moment, film-makers have to be on best behaviour because you've got to get the residents on your side. Once a crew has started paying, they're going to say, 'We've paid for this.' More confrontation will result."

Chris Wheeldon, who is chairman of the Location Managers' Guild, said the legislation

could cause problems for smaller productions.

"The key is no one has a very clear idea of what is a realistic fee. Everybody thinks of £1,000 a day, but a lot of production companies operate on a quarter of that or less. All of a sudden you can't afford to make stuff any more."

Among films being made in the capital at present are *Mermaid*, from the book by Julian Barnes, with Emily Watson, the star of *Breaking The Waves*, and *Romance and Reverie*, with John Hannah and Frank Finlay.

## England is forever as Bond stays at home

Louise Jury

James Bond has been saved for Britain after swift work by planners, film-makers and businessmen found a new home for the legendary secret agent.

The production team for the eighteenth adventure with secret agent 007 moved on to the 12-acre site in Hertfordshire, on Tuesday.

Fears had grown that the next Bond movie might have to be made abroad after the Leavesden studios in Hertfordshire, where the seventeenth film, *Goldeneye*, was made, were booked for the making of three new *Star Wars* epics.

But Eon Productions, the Bond film producers, and Herts Film Link, the county's film-promoting unit, co-operated on scouring the region to find an alternative and discovered a disused site at the village of Frogmore.

Barbara Broccoli, the daughter of the late James Bond producer Cubby Broccoli, and



pled to start in February. Gordon Arnell, of Eon, said they were delighted. "It's always been American money, but Bond is a very British subject. It always worked well for the Broccoli family here."

Although one film was filmed substantially in France and another in Mexico, British crews were acknowledged world experts and a base near London gave ready access to that expertise. "Over 30 years we have two or three generations of technicians who have come to work on the Bonds," Mr Arnell said.

Chris Holt, of Herts Film Link, said: "If everyone wants it to happen and you have the right people behind it and the drive, you can do these things."

"We all wanted it for Britain. It will be a good boost for our local economy and great kudos."

Eon had accounts with around 200 small local suppliers when they were making *Goldeneye*.

Michael Wilson, his stepson, visited the site 10 days ago, consultations were held with residents and the local authority over last weekend and outline planning permission was granted by St Albans Council on Monday. Shooting, with Pierce Brosnan as Bond, is now sched-

uled to start in February. Gordon Arnell, of Eon, said they were delighted. "It's always been American money, but Bond is a very British subject. It always worked well for the Broccoli family here."

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## news

Angry football supporters say changing the team's strip in January is exploiting youngsters who will have to buy new colours

# England's kit change takes the shirt off the fans' backs



Old stock: Out goes indigo blue; in comes a red version recalling the 1966 World Cup win

Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

## Charlie Bain

The row over changing football strips resurfaced yesterday after the Football Association announced that it would revamp the England strip in January, just days after thousands of children will have received scaled-down versions for Christmas.

The controversial move, made in conjunction with the manufacturers Umbro, will provoke fury among parents who have spent up to £70 on the strip worn by the England team during Euro 96 only to see it go out of date.

For many die-hard fans, wearing the up-to-date kit is almost as important as seeing their side win and every year pre-season debates rage about the insensitive profiteering of clubs who release new strips at extortionate prices.

Yesterday's move predictably outraged consumer groups and was heavily criticised by supporters clubs and the Labour Party, who accused the Football Association of exploiting fans.

"Young supporters, who will be overjoyed to get the England strip at Christmas, will be very disillusioned in January when the new kit comes out," said Labour's consumer affairs spokesman, Nigel Griffiths.

"Football bosses would be better employed in introducing measures to maintain the strong support they have from youngsters instead of cashing in on what is effectively a pre- and post-Christmas bonanza."

Tony Kershaw, chairman of the National Federation of Football Supporters Clubs, said that after England's success in Euro 96, thousands of parents would be buying the replica kit as Christmas presents.

"To allow people to do this and then have a change early in the New Year seems like they're wanting to clear the old stock first before producing a new one," he said.

"I can well imagine little Johnny going to school and the lads will be pulling his leg for

having last year's kit and having just had it for Christmas."

Manufacturers Umbro confirmed yesterday that England's home strip featuring the three lions on a white shirt would be revamped. The away strip, currently in indigo blue, is expected to be replaced next May by a red version of that worn by the 1966 World Cup-winning team.

"It has been planned for a long time to introduce the new strip early in the New Year, and it will be part of England's campaign for the World Cup,"



Shearer, in the white shirt, that is to be modified

a spokesman for Umbro said. "While Umbro can see that the Euro 96 strip could get out of date in the New Year, it is still a very valuable strip, and will be a collector's item."

The Football Association yesterday defended the change, saying that the team's strips were restyled every two years. "The strips are changed on what is effectively a two-year rota," FA spokesman, Steve Double, said.

"The change is being made a bit sooner because there was a chorus for the return of the red kit before the Euro 96 semi-final against Germany ... It's always been accepted that the kits have a two-year life span."

## Paracetamol in smaller packs for safety

Tighter controls on the availability of paracetamol and other painkillers were proposed yesterday by the Government.

Smaller packs and greater provision of information were recommended in a consultation exercise launched by the Department of Health.

The Health Minister, Gerald Malone, said: "Analgesics are extremely safe and effective when used in the recommended doses and conditions. However, there are real concerns about the dangers of overdose."

He added: "The way forward is to ensure that full and accurate information reaches consumers. That information should be conveyed both on the label and in a patient leaflet, in a pack whose size meets their needs without leaving large numbers in the bathroom cabinet."

Paracetamol is an extremely safe painkiller when taken at the recommended dosage and is used as an effective remedy by millions of people.

The recommended adult dose for paracetamol is one to two tablets, every four to six

hours, up to a maximum of eight tablets a day.

An overdose brings the risk of fatal liver damage but symptoms may not occur for some time after taking the drug.

The proposals include an additional label-warning for medicines containing paracetamol to say: "Immediate advice should be sought in the event of an overdose even if you do not feel unwell."

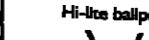
They also suggest cutting the upper limit pack size for paracetamol on general sale from 25 x 500mg tablets or capsules to 12 x 500mg tablets or capsules (adults) or 12 x 120mg tablets (children).

Labour MP Paul Flynn, who has been campaigning for tighter restrictions on the drug, said: "Paracetamol kills twice as many people as heroin. The Government has long underestimated the deaths."

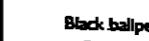
"One health minister told me that annual deaths had gone down from 65 to 48. Later he confessed that the true figures were 568 to 453. The Government has wilfully neglected the dangers."

## Newton solves multipen problem for rotring's Doktor Schmidt.

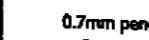
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news

# Truckers slow France to a snail's pace

1,000 British lorries trapped by barricades in dispute over working hours

James Cusick  
Calais

Up to 1,000 British lorries, many with perishable cargoes, have been caught up in a blockade of roads and motorways throughout France by 10,000 angry French lorry drivers.

The protest over working conditions, now in its fifth day, shows no sign of easing. Many regions throughout France are suffering from lengthy tailbacks. French drivers, co-ordinated by CB radios and mobile phones, are using a tactic called "escargot", driving at snail's pace. The demonstrations have already led to petrol stations running out. Many in the worst hit areas in the north were yesterday already displaying *Pas de Gas* (no petrol or oil) signs.

Although there have been sporadic outbreaks of violence



Jam today: Lorry drivers are deliberately going out of their way to cause what is said to be the worst traffic chaos in France since 1968

bc the worst to hit the French roads network since the national protests of May 1968.

A paralytic of normal traffic has been one tactic. The other tactic has been to blockade petroleum facilities especially at Bordeaux. Many petrol stations in Northern France are expected to run dry throughout the weekend. The situation in north west France is, according to one official, "critical".

From Bordeaux travelling north in a clockwise direction there are fixed lorry blockades at Nantes, Rennes, Caen, Rouen, Strasbourg, Riom, Chavagnes, Avignon and Toulouse. At other cities traffic, although moving, is deliberately being controlled to go very, very slow. These include Dijon, Chalon, Clermont, Lyon and Lille.

There have also been barricades at Rungis on the outskirts of Paris, and at St Pierre in the Ile de France region.

At Calais, already economically hit by the fire in the tunnel, the normal busy freight car parks for the ferries looked deserted yesterday. One English driver from Canterbury said his journey to Calais had been a "two-day nightmare".

At Dover, police said that despite the potential for chaos on the other side of the Channel, lorry drivers still appeared to be taking the risk of travelling to France.

## Eurotunnel losing £1m a day

French judicial officials inspecting the burned-out wreckage of five freight wagons still left inside the Channel tunnel will continue their examinations over the weekend, writes James Cusick.

With the Inter-Governmental Safety Commission suspending its discussions in Calais for the weekend, talks between the commission and representatives from Eurotunnel will resume on Monday. Yesterday, senior Eurotunnel officials met in Paris to discuss strategy for next week when they continue attempts to persuade the commission that services should be allowed to restart.

The key problem, according to Eurotunnel sources, is that the severe damage sustained to one of the two main tunnels rules out putting a "safety case" for the tunnel's operations.

For a quick resumption of either Eurostar's passenger train service or the Le Shuttle car train, Eurotunnel may need to place two trains in the damaged tunnel on stand-by at either side of the main damaged area to accommodate any future accident and the subsequent need for an emergency evacuation.

Having insisted that the loss of no lives meant their safety regime functioned as planned, Eurotunnel has placed itself in

no position to demand that safety procedures now be overruled to accommodate a quick return of normal services - and the return of revenue.

Over the weekend, the wreckage of the five remaining freight wagons will be separated to allow them to be brought out of the tunnel in a state that will allow engineers to continue a forensic evaluation of how the fire started. As with any accident on this scale, the inquiry teams will be expected to both discover cause and deliver advice on future precautions.

With Eurotunnel losing £1m a day and still facing the unquantifiable task of recapturing public confidence, the prospect of a long drawn-out inquiry will be a further blow.

Whether the safety commission will allow the company to continue using the lattice freight wagons is now being seen as crucial to short-term economic viability. Before the fire, Eurotunnel's numerous banks which financed its mounting debts had been in discussion over a £4.1bn refinancing package. If the commission outlaws the open wagons and demands a redesigned freight service - as firms experts had previously demanded - the bill for new wagons will be an extra worry for the banks.

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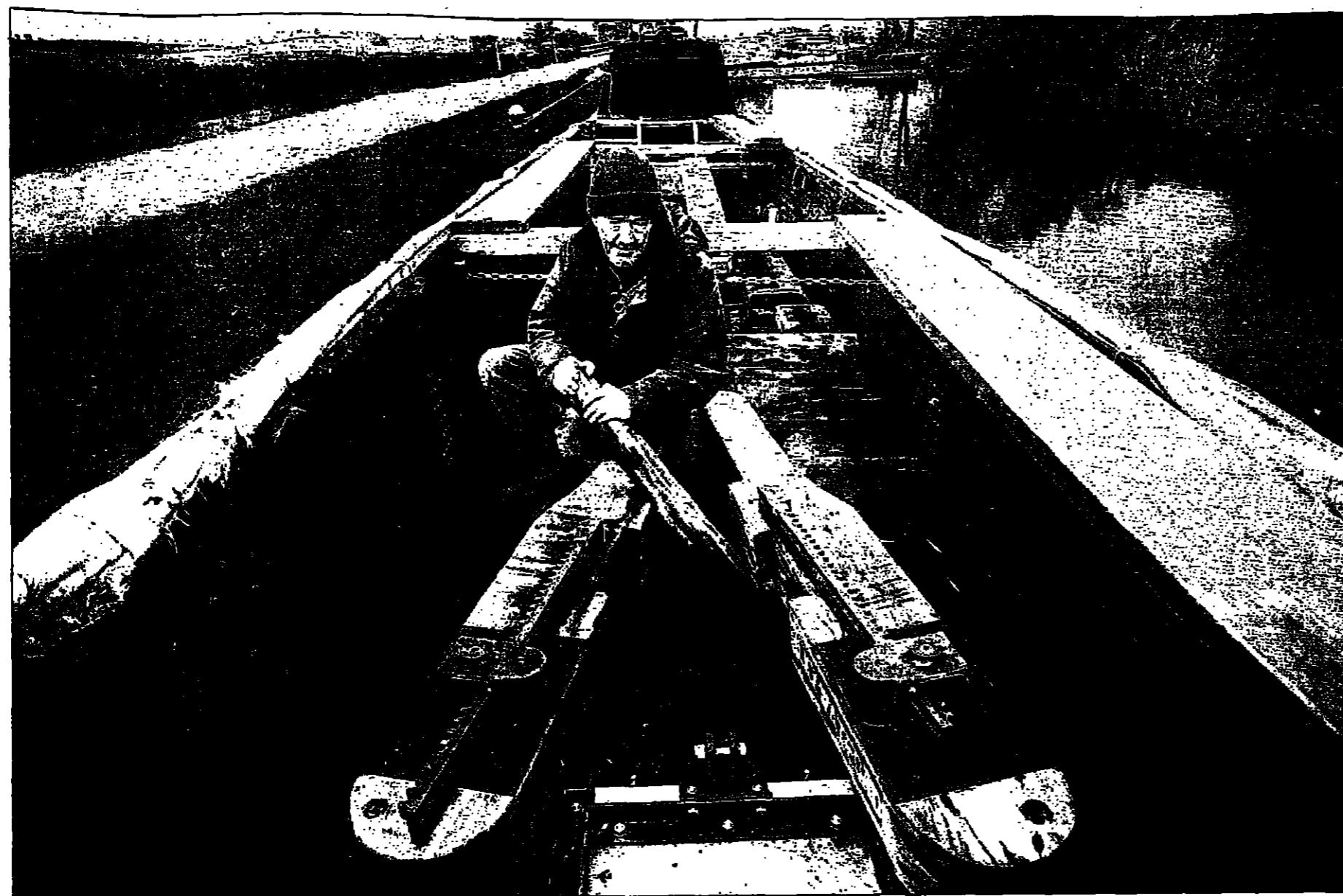


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## news



Opening time: A boatman, Graham Horton, with the paddle gear of new lockgates for the Grand Union Canal as they are taken from Foxton, Leicestershire, to Watford Locks near Daventry. The gates, built in traditional manner by the canal's managers, British Waterways, weigh two tonnes each and are 14ft high

## Accident victims must pay more

Police to charge 1,000 per cent more for official reports

### Ian Burrell

Commercially-minded police forces have increased their charges for official reports supplied to road accident victims by more than 1,000 per cent.

At the same time NHS trusts are demanding more than £100 for medical records which by law should cost £10 plus a photocopying and postage fee.

Lawyers representing the victims said last week that the developments were a direct result of Treasury pressure on police forces and NHS trusts to become more cost-effective.

They fear the charges will encourage insurance companies to contest personal injury claims knowing that it is harder for clients to get the evidence they require.

One victim of a serious road accident in Bristol was made to pay £650 for a police accident report which until recently would have cost £48.

Ian Walker, of solicitors Russell, Jones and Walker, said the report had been "absolutely vital" to his client's case and that he had no option but to pay the Avon and Somerset police.

He said: "Forces are deciding that there's money to be made here. They say, 'If we have done a specialist investigation report you will have to pay us a commercial fee for it.' This is something the police do as part of their normal functions of investigating road accidents. They have done the work anyway but have decided that, with money being tight, this is a good way to make some more."

Until the increased charges, forces would supply expert accident reports, along with police notebook records from the scene of the accident and statements from witnesses, for a standard fee of £48.

The police accident investigator, who examines the scene of a crash to see if criminal proceedings should be brought, is able to determine the speed and direction of vehicles involved using mathematical formulae, measurements and photographs of the scene.

The police report can be crucial to a road accident victim claiming for a personal injury for which the insurance company disputes liability. The Association of Personal Injury

Lawyers has produced a report citing 22 trusts and hospitals which it claims are overcharging for records.

Oxfordshire Health Services charges £1 a page for copies of the medical records it holds.

Aintree Hospitals, in Liverpool, charges a standard fee of £75 plus 25p a copy, for records.

Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton healthcare trusts, in London, attempted to charge £50 for records but reduced the fee to £10 when threatened with legal action.

Kerry Underwood, a solicitor based in St Albans, Herts, said: "People are being charged exorbitant sums to obtain their records when they have had to pay for the treatment and the records through tax contributions in the first place."

Trusts are often unwilling to supply health records to solicitors if they fear the information is likely to be used in litigation.

**People are being asked exorbitant fees for work that they have already paid for'**

against them. Paul Balen, of the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers, said it was "outrageous" that trusts were "openly flouting the law" by breaching the Access to Health Records Act 1991 which requires them to submit records for £10 plus photocopying and postage.

"We need the Department of Health to tell the trusts that this is unlawful."

Derek Day, deputy director of the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts, said: "Trusts have been costing out their services as part of their independent status. We would advise members to make sure that what they are doing is within the law."

The Department of Health says it is "trying to resolve the problem", while the Home Office said individual police forces were entitled to charge what they thought appropriate for specialist services.

## Test-tube baby chances halved for over-35s

### Liz Hunt Health Editor

A woman's chance of a successful test-tube pregnancy drops sharply after the age of 35, according to a new analysis of more than 25,000 women treated in British clinics over three years.

The age of a woman is widely accepted as one of the most important factors influencing a successful outcome in *in-vitro* fertilisation (IVF). However, the new data derived from the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority's records since its inception in 1991 provides the best available evidence on the outcome of the treatment to date.

The overall success rate per IVF treatment was 14 per cent but it varied dramatically with age and was highest among women of 25 to 30. Surprisingly, women younger than this had lower success rates. The reason is not known and is under investigation. (It is already well-established that the "take home baby" rate varies widely between clinics, with some achieving success rates of up to 35 per cent.)

Professor Allan Templeton said that the cause of infertility did not appear to influence the outcome but the chances of pregnancy fell with each failed cycle of treatment. "We found that the best possibility of success is in the first cycle of IVF treatment and that there is a significant negative effect with increasing number of attempts thereafter."

The live birth rate was better for women with unexplained infertility than for those in whom tubal disease (blockage, inflammation and so on of the Fallopian tubes) had been diagnosed.

Overall, 36,961 IVF cycles (79 per cent of all those registered) between August 1991 and April 1994 in 26,889 women were investigated. Almost three-quarters of the women had one treatment cycle; one-fifth had two, and 8 per cent more than two. A further group of 1,416 IVF cycles using donated eggs were included in the study.

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# Inside, an elephants' parade will caper alongside the Miss World finalists; outside they will be torching themselves



Asian queen: Reita Faria, Indian winner of Miss World in 1966, when her victory was uncontroversial

## Faded pin-up in search of an admirer

Ian Burrow

Like Baby Doc Duvalier of Haiti and General Manuel Noriega of Panama before her, Miss World treks from continent to continent as a refugee in search of a friendly home.

A 45-year-old who has known better times, she arrives in each new port clutching her baggage of swimsuits and slingbacks and provokes an inevitable outcry of protest.

Born in England in 1951, Miss World once wore her crown with pride. Then came the revolution of political correctness and her palace was destroyed. She was cast out and denounced as anachronistic, self-indulgent and tasteless.

"In reverse order ..." are the famous words of Eric Morley - who with his wife Julia, created the contest - as the winner is crowned, and the international beauty pageant is indeed in retreat. Until recently she was based in Bophuthatswana where she attracted controversy by posing for photographs in poverty-stricken villages as part of Operation Hunger.

This year, she has moved on to Bangalore, where she has united right-wing politicians with feminist groups in their anger at the perceived slur on their culture that she represents.

Tomorrow, as Miss World preens herself at a sumptuous event at the Chinnaswamy cricket club, groups of Indian women are planning to set light to themselves in protest. One man in a southern Indian city has already burnt himself alive while shouting anti-Miss World slogans.

According to Julia Morley,

Ian McGirk  
New Delhi

Thousands of security guards have been recruited in an attempt to prevent disruption of tonight's Miss World contest in Bangalore by angry feminists, some of whom are threatening to set fire to themselves.

Police are hunting for KN Shashikala, the stocky Bengali karate black-belt who started the controversy three months ago when she organised students into a group of "vigilant women against indecent exposure", and filed a petition to ban the contest. When India won in 1966 and again two years ago, there were no protests.

However, her agitation spurred the organisers into retreat, and the swimsuit section was diverted to the Seychelles. The mathematics graduate, who is in her 20s, vanished yesterday, probably fearing arrest.

Earlier this week, a 25-year-old student from the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu, who

torched himself to death in protest against the contest, held last year in Sun City, South Africa. Police also found four bombs planted at contest sites.

Unfazed, Judge R.P. Sethi ruled that the pageant could continue, providing that no indecent exposure, nudity, or obscenity takes place. A chorus line of 16 elephants will caper alongside the 89 leggy semi-finalists as the show is broadcast live to 115 nations.

Unseasonable rain threatens to make both the competition and the fiery protest fizzles out. Ticket sales have not helped. The Sultan of Brunei ordered 200 tickets for the grand finale, but nearly half of the cheaper seats remain unsold at the Chinnaswamy Stadium. A crowd of just 10,000 is expected along with the mob which will gather outside for the feminists' mock-pageant.

Nearby loom enormous 20ft cardboard cut-outs of the contest's main organiser, the Hindi star Amitabh Bachchan. He

is naked, with his hands cupping his genitals. One of the judges, the actor Oliver Reed, seemed quite happy to be left off.

Julia Morley, who runs the contest with her husband said:

"We make money on beauty and spend it on the ugly face of the world. That's our purpose and protests will not deter us."

Some Indians view the contest as a Trojan horse for the multi-nationals who have been eyeing India's burgeoning middle-class as an untapped market. And although feminists resent the display of flesh, more traditional women decry the imposition of Western ideals of beauty on an ancient culture.

India has sent participants to beauty pageants for the past 30 years, and the nation was almost smug with self-congratulation in 1994 when it won Miss Universe and Miss World. The latter, Ashwariya Rai, is too yellow to brave the protesters and judge tonight's pageant. But she's got a valid doctor's excuse: she is suffering from jaundice.



Turning up the heat: Protesters burning effigies of Miss World in India

## THE LONDON AMBULANCE SERVICE FACES YET ANOTHER EMERGENCY.

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One year ago, the London Ambulance Service had the worst emergency call response time in Britain. Change had to come.

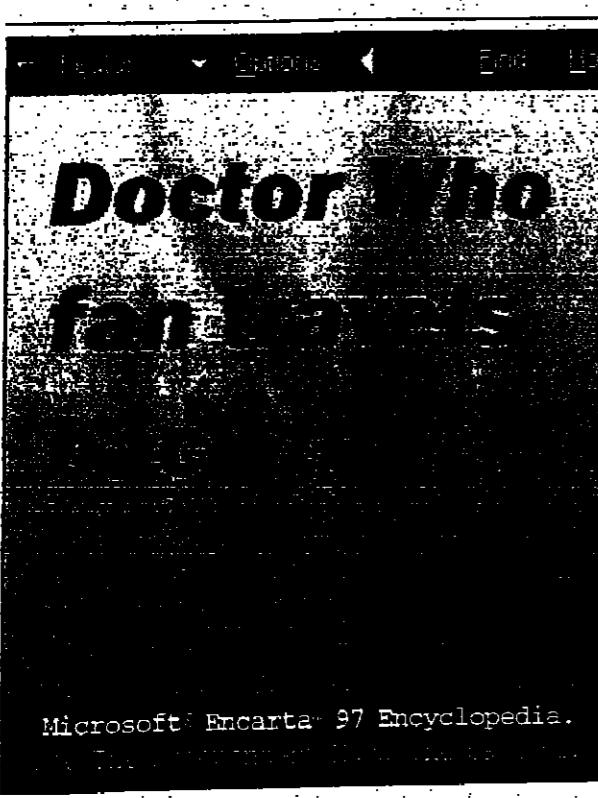
A three-part documentary Red Base One Four closely follows the London Ambulance Service through its most chal-

lenging year - as staff continue to push themselves to answer 2000 calls a day and management struggle to improve the service at all costs.

We watch as tough discussions are held and drastic measures employed. Measures

that inevitably lead to conflict between management and unions. Both parties agree the London Ambulance Service can't afford to compromise on the streets. But can a compromise be reached behind closed doors?

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## news

Phil is less than Cool as he joins the celebrities' masquerade



Look this way: Phil Cool appearing between his mask (left) and Jimmy Tarbuck's in an exhibition of more than 500 painted by celebrities at the Royal Festival Hall, South Bank, in London yesterday. An auction of 150 masks in aid of the Prince's Trust charity for young people will be held at the hall next Thursday

Photograph: Keith Dobney

Cheltenham College accused of 19th-century work practices

# Removal of head buys peace at school

Fran Abrams  
Education Correspondent

The head of Cheltenham College has resigned despite a parents' campaign to prevent his removal from the school by governors. Peter Wilkes has decided to leave the public school next summer even though an independent inquiry found that attempts to remove him had breached both natural justice and employment law. The inquiry's report also accused the school of having "19th century" employment practices.

Mr Wilkes said yesterday that he was leaving to prevent the school from tearing itself apart. A compromise agreement between parents and governors at Cheltenham is expected to be struck today. Parents had demanded that Mr Wilkes should stay, that several of the governors should go, and that parents should be given seats on the governing body.

The president of the body, Nigel Farrow, resigned last week. Others may go in a restructuring exercise as part of the peace deal now being struck.

Mr Wilkes was asked to resign after the school slipped from 147th to 205th in A-level league tables. The governors, who include General Sir John Waters, former deputy supreme allied commander Europe and Sir Michael Perry, chairman of Unilever, also criticized his managerial style and his relationships with senior staff.

However, a meeting of parents voted by 620 to seven in favour of Mr Wilkes' reinstatement and of the resignation of the school council (governors). They were also angry that they were initially given no explanation of the head's dismissal.

The case has highlighted the power of governors in private schools. All state schools are required to have elected parents on their governing bodies but independent schools are not. Cheltenham parents, who pay fees of around £12,000 a year, say they should be told more about what is going on.

An independent inquiry into the dispute by Tony Higgins, chief executive of the Cheltenham-based Universities and Colleges Admissions Service,

was presented to governors last week. It said the management of independent schools should be open to public scrutiny, if only to ensure that justice was seen to be done.

Mr Higgins wrote: "It is expected in the 1990s that the normal rules of natural justice, not to mention employment legislation, are observed. It is my view that in this case neither was observed. It seems ironic that a council which is looking for a dynamic leader to take the college into the 21st century... can still be operating employment practices which were perhaps more common in the 19th century."

Mr Wilkes said it was in the best interests of the school that he should not seek reinstatement.



Sir Michael Perry: Critic of head's management style

ment. "Parents have been mounting a wonderful campaign to have me reinstated. While I hated the idea of letting down my loyal parents, the school's interests had to be paramount. This is tearing the place apart."

Mark Hicks Beach, chairman of the parents' committee set up to fight Mr Wilkes' case, said he was very disappointed by the resignation.

"Mr Wilkes is a superb headmaster who has done a lot for the school, but it had to be his decision."

"Both he and his wife have been through a lot of stress and strain in the last few weeks, and I can understand it. Whatever he has done has been in the best interests of the school," he said.

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**Money values:** Giscard pinpoints key issue and questions value of Paris's economic and foreign icon

## French franc feels the heat

Mary Dejevsky  
Paris

In a miserably cold and wet November, with oil refineries barricaded by protesting lorry drivers and the public cross about the world in general and France in particular, a long-taboo subject has burst on to the political agenda. Suddenly it is open season on the *franc fort*, France's "strong-franc" policy, an article of faith and a totem of national dignity since well before Jacques Chirac became president.

The argument was reopened by the former president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in a column in *L'Express*. Rather than conceal his remarks with a discreet headline, the magazine splashed the key question over its front cover: "Should the franc be devalued? Giscard's plan for breaking the impasse?"

Mr Giscard broke no new ground, but two taboo. Recognising that Germany would be unlikely to agree any change in the value of the Mark against the dollar or any other currency, he proposed not only devaluing the franc by 9 per cent to trigger domestic growth but also decoupling it from the Mark, which would remove at one stroke the



cornerstone of French foreign and economic policy.

The response was immediate on international exchanges, the franc wobbled; in 24 hours it had lost two centimes against the Mark. Politicians weighed in as though shackles had finally been broken. The debate was launched; the right was divided within itself; so, more quietly, was the left.

Those who backed Mr Giscard's view included Philippe Séguin, chairman of parliament and anti-Maastricht campaigner; Charles Pasqua, former interior minister; and Alain Madelin, former economy minister. All are infinitely more popular with the public than any member of the government.

With President Chirac visiting Japan, even the most pro-

European government ministers seemed to hesitate before issuing a rebuttal.

When an official statement came – in the form of a brief joint communiqué from Chancellor Helmut Kohl and the French Prime Minister, Alain Juppé, no one took any notice. The franc continued to slide, and the politicians continued to scrap. Yesterday the governor of the Bank of France, Jean-Claude Trichet, issued a statement reiterating there was no change in its policy towards the exchange rate or the Mark, but uncertainty remained.

One reason was Mr Giscard's status as a veteran player in France's Europe policy, if no longer in party politics.

As one French commentator said: "You can say what you like about Giscard, but one thing you can't say is that he is stupid." He would have been well aware of the likely impact of his words; he may even have been used by President Chirac to fly a kite.

With unemployment stubbornly increasing despite a plethora of government measures to reduce it, might the French public just be willing to sacrifice a little national pride to find a solution?

### significant shorts

#### Deal eases tension in Belarus

A deal between President Alexander Lukashenko and MPs has eased tension in Belarus. He wanted to use a referendum tomorrow to tighten his grip on rival institutions and extend his term. He has now cancelled decrees making the results legally binding; in return, parliament agreed not to impeach him. *Reuter - Minsk*

#### Jailed Chinese activist ailing

The dissident Wang Dan, jailed for "plotting to overthrow the government", has throat and back problems in a prison that does not have facilities to treat him, and his condition could deteriorate with the onset of winter, his mother said. *Reuter - Peking*

#### Scientologists convicted over suicide case

Fifteen Scientologists were convicted of fraud and other offences in a case that could help set boundaries between the power of the French state and the activity of religious groups. Charges related to the suicide of Patrice Vic, 31, after psychiatric treatment prescribed by Jean-Jacques Mazer, then head of the church in Lyons. Vic's widow said he was pressed by Mazer to continue taking sessions, which he could not afford. Mazer was convicted of unpremeditated murder and fraud and jailed for three years, half suspended. The judge said "individuals who use a legitimate ... religious doctrine for financial ... ends and in doing so deliberately deceive a third party are liable to be prosecuted for fraud". *Mary Dejevsky - Paris*

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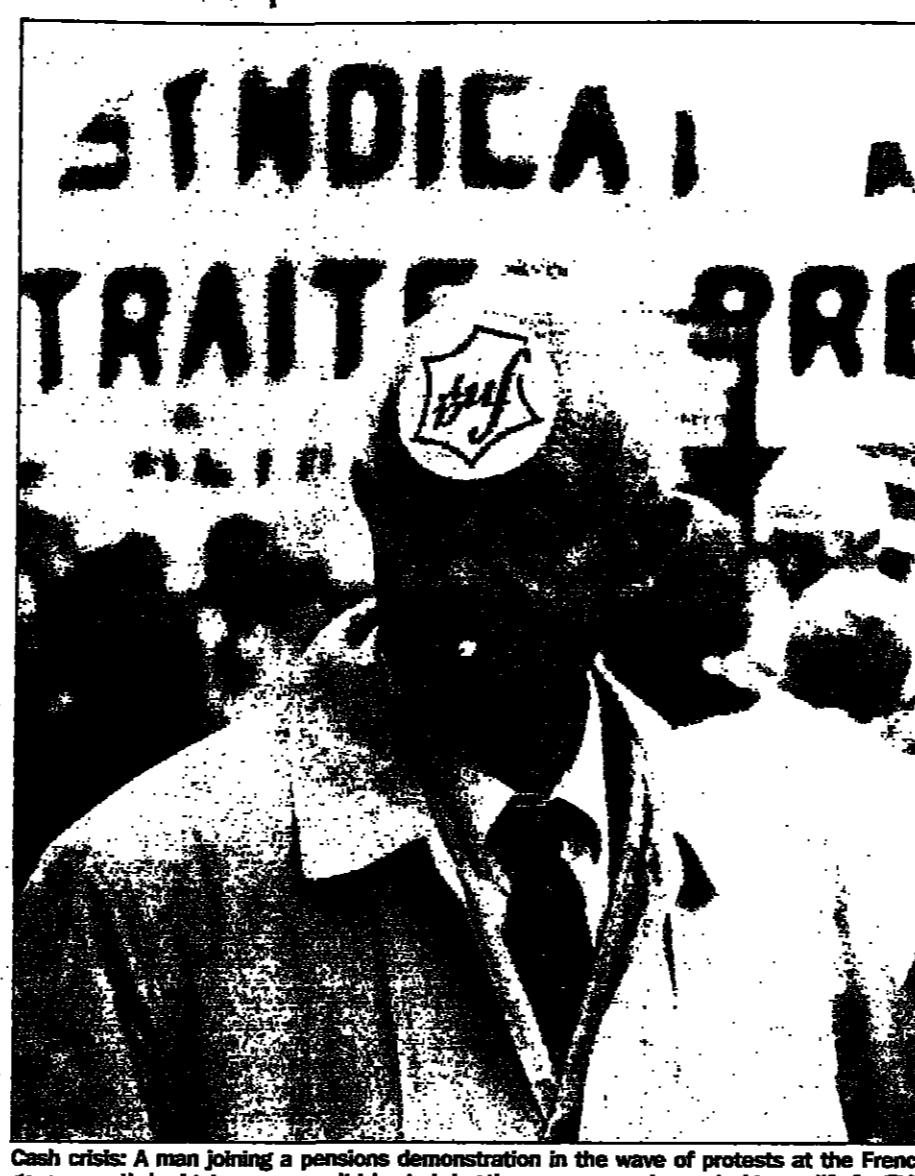


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## Buoyant Italy says its ready to rejoin ERM

Imre Karacs  
Bonn

In a last-minute sprint to the starting line of European monetary union, Italy served notice yesterday that it would rejoin the exchange-rate mechanism (ERM) within a week, and vowed to meet the Maastricht criteria laid down for participants in the new currency.

Italy intends to be one of the founding members of EMU, proclaimed Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, the country's Finance Minister. Speaking at a European banking conference in Frankfurt, he added: "Italians are determined to do everything necessary to be an element of stability and not an element of tension or distortion".

Mr Ciampi said the limit forced to retreat from the ERM in 1992, would be back in the fold "in November", thus meeting one of the three main conditions for EMU membership.

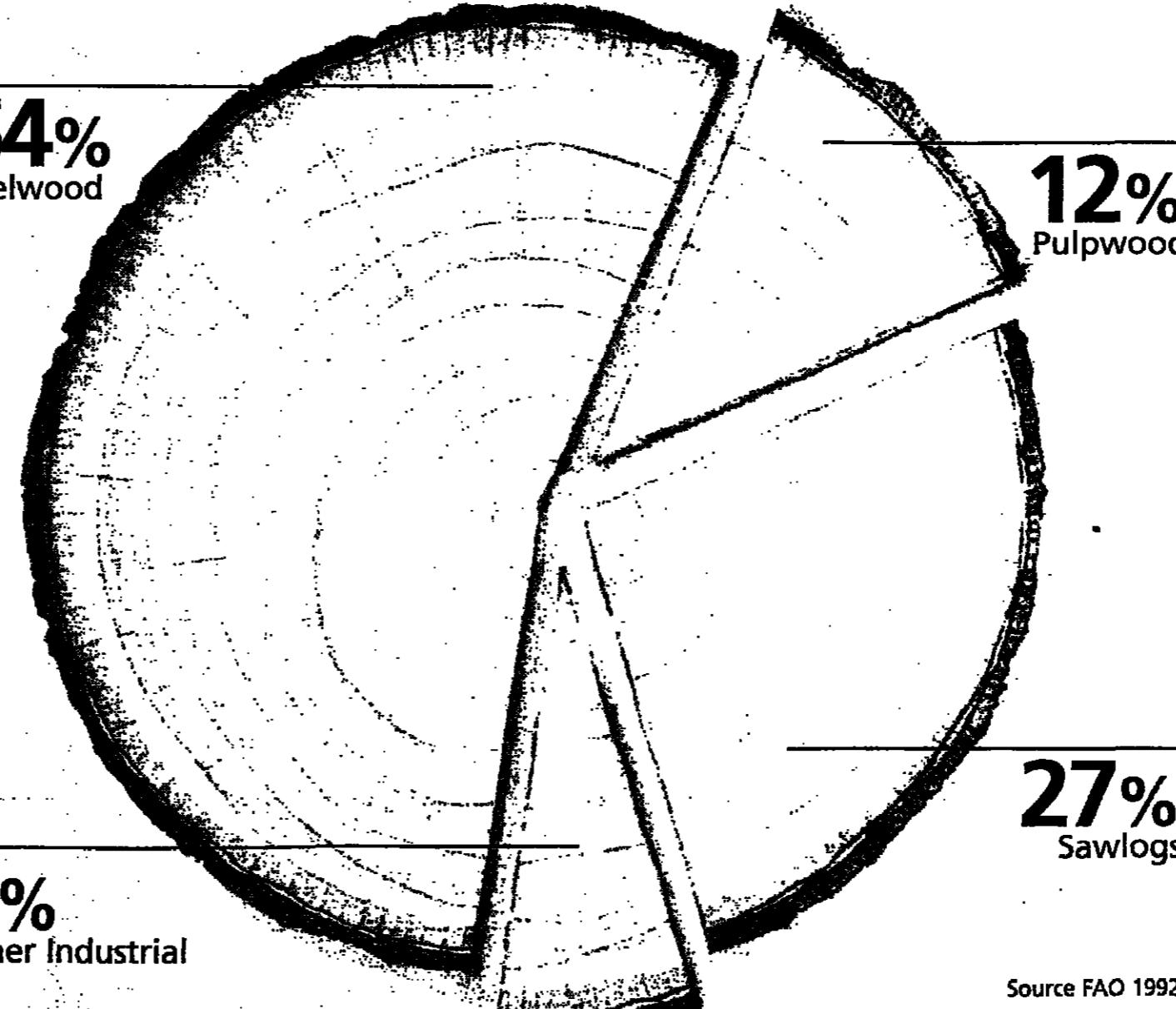
On the other conditions, public debt and budget deficit, Rome is also very close to attaining the targets – frighteningly close in German eyes. Italy's budget deficit is forecast to stand at 3.5 per cent of gross domestic product in the qualifying year of 1997. Under nor-

mal circumstances, that would have entitled the Germans to slam the door in Mr Ciampi's face, but the 0.3 per cent overshoot is likely to be no worse than Bonn's performance.

The Bundesbank and the German parliament have reserved themselves the right to vet all applications, confident that the "Club Med" countries would sink under the weight of their own abysmal statistics. Now Bonn is having to find new excuses to keep out those it does not trust. Chancellor Helmut Kohl, the top speaker at yesterday's Frankfurt event, shifted the emphasis to the less scientific concept of "long-term stability".

Enthralled by Germany's failings, former no-hoppers are pressing their claims. Spain joined the vanguard yesterday with a confident prediction that the peseta would be in the hard core from the beginning. The Club-Med's progress towards fiscal rectitude is in stark contrast to the profligacy of the two countries that are driving European integration. Germany has been temporarily knocked off course by the slowdown of its economy, but for France there appears to be no end in sight for economic and political turbulence.

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# Bloody trade that fuels Rwanda's war

Steve Boggan  
Chief Reporter

For once, it appeared that a UN arms embargo had worked. A ship, the *Malo*, carrying more than 80 tons of weapons bound for troubled Somalia had been seized by the Government of Seychelles.

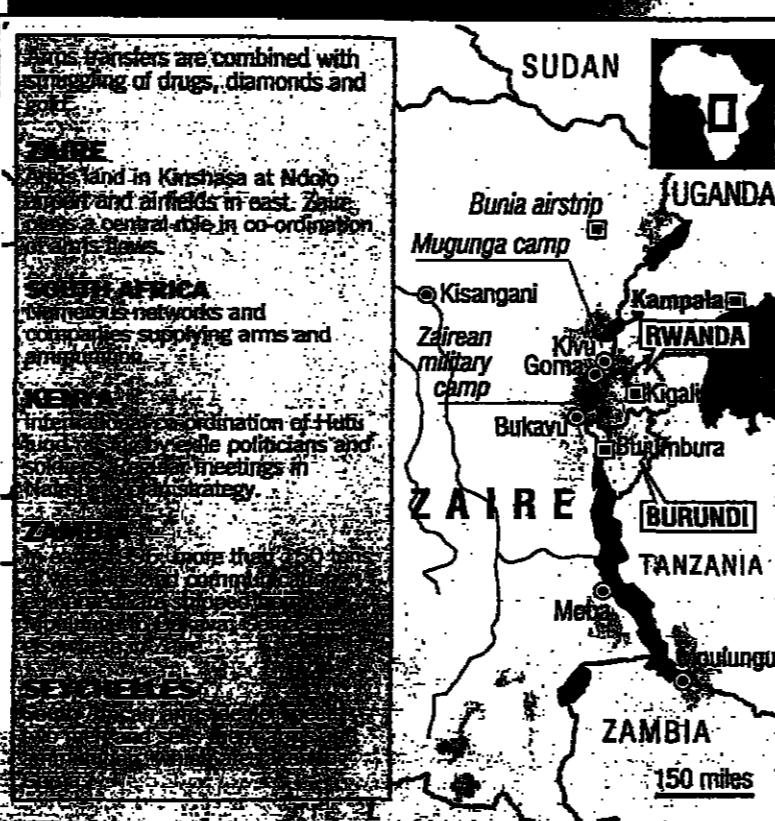
It was 1993 and the UN had banned sales of weapons to Somalia as warring clansmen reduced the country to chaos. "In impounding this ship," James Michel, the Seychelles Defence Minister, said, "we did the international community a service." There was no doubt, as

Bagosora is just one of dozens of businessmen, parrots and mercenaries, operating from Kenya, Zaire, South Africa, Israel, the UK, Albania, the former Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, identified by a UN Commission of Inquiry into the extent – and sources – of illicit arms sales to Rwanda.

The deals are many, the methods ingenious, but perhaps the Seychelles sting is the best example of the lengths to which the former Rwandan government would go to re-arm. According to an unpublished UN report on the Commission's work, obtained by the *Independent*, the deal began with an approach to the Seychelles government by a South African businessman, Willem Ehlers, director of a company called Delta Aero.

Ehlers said he was interested in buying the impounded weapons, including 2,500 AK47 rifles, 6,000 mortars and 5,000 fragmentation grenades, on behalf of the Zairean government, against whom there is no embargo. On 4 June 1994, he arrived in the Seychelles, accompanied by Bagosora who, with the apparent complicity of the Zairean authorities, had a Zairean passport and an end-user certificate bearing the seal of the Republic of Zaire. Two shipments were flown out of the country on 16 and 18 June – more than a month after the UN embargo was imposed – before the Seychelles government became suspicious and stopped a third consignment. Media reports, fuelled in part by the in-

## How the world armed the Hutus



**FUND RAISING**  
Cash is raised in refugee camps, among Hutu communities worldwide and in Rwanda itself.

vestigative work of the charity Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, had established that the weapons had been diverted to Goma and into the hands of the former government forces. It was a perfect sting: weapons impounded on behalf of the UN were used to circumvent another UN arms embargo. But it was one of

many. "Highly reliable sources in Belgium, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania and the United Kingdom painted a coherent picture of huge, loose, overlapping webs of more or less illicit arms deals, arms flights and arms deliveries spanning the continent from South Africa as far as Europe, particularly eastern Europe," said

the UN Commission's report, dated 28 October 1996. "Those engaged in such activities make free use of fake end-user certificates, exploit loopholes in the law, evade customs and other airport controls by making clandestine night take-offs and landings, file false flight plans and conceal their movements by using fab-

ricated zone permits, evading radar tracking and observing radio silence in flight." It has been suspected for years that a number of Britons or British companies had engineered arms sales to Rwanda up to the UN embargo of 17 May 1994. But last week came proof that at least one, Mil-Tec Corporation Ltd, had continued after it. Pa-

pers abandoned by fleeing Hutu

mil

lition in eastern Zaire showed that the UK-based company had sold £3.3m worth of arms, including consignments delivered in July.

One of the men linked to Mil-

Tec, Kumar Anup Vidyarthi, vanished from his home in north London this week. His

partner, Kumar Gupta, was

aboard two Ukrainian-registered aircraft, and on to the former government forces in June.

The Commission's latest task is to find out more about a Nigerian-registered aircraft carrying arms from Malta to Goma on 25 May 1994, which, according to documents recently uncovered, included one Col T. Bagosora among its few passengers.

## Refugees massacred on return to Burundi, says UN

Geneva (agencies) – Nearly 300 Hutus returning from refugee camps in eastern Zaire were massacred in a church in Burundi last month, according to UN officials.

The report, by the UN Human Rights Centre, highlights a disturbing aspect of the exodus of Hutu refugees from Zaire, which has become a flood in recent days. Hutus returning to Rwanda have been killed, tortured and witness-

ed.

Christian Berthiaume, spokeswoman for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, said the incident took place in a church in Murambi on 22 October. The victims, believed

to be Burundian Hutus, were among the first refugees to return to Burundi when fighting broke out around UN refugee camps in eastern Zaire last month.

A spokesman for Burundi's Tutsi-led army called the report "propaganda" from the National Council for the Defence of Democracy, a Hutu exile opposition group. "This is pure fabrication," Maj. Mamert

Sinari said yesterday. "I can tell you there was no massacre."

Meanwhile talks in Stuttgart between 35 nations ready in principle to take part in a military intervention force in central Africa got off to a slow and confusing start yesterday. The talks, between senior military officers, are expected to stretch through the weekend. The aim is to produce a menu of possible actions

for governments to consider, ranging from the 11,000-strong intervention force originally proposed to something much less ambitious.

"By the end of the weekend I would hope we will have developed a full slate of options," said Lieutenant-General Maurice Baril of Canada, which is coordinating the UN-authorised mission. The original aim was to escort

aid to Rwandan refugees in eastern Zaire and encourage them to go home. But the voluntary return of 500,000 Rwandans in the last week has produced sharp disagreements on what kind of mission to send, if any. Governments have been unable to agree on the scale of the remaining problem, how many refugees remain in Zaire, their location and condition.



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The last rose of autumn, caught, delicately frosted, in the week's wintry blast. Taken with a macro lens and 1,000 ASA colour negative.

Photographer Brian Harris



# the long weekend

THE INDEPENDENT • SATURDAY 23 NOVEMBER 1996

The trains were late, cars broke down, everyone came to work damp and grumbling. You could tell it was winter. It was cold as well. The snow quickly melted into a drab grey and flowers that were bold and colourful the day before were struck down by the frost. Still, we can dream of sunny times in Antigua, mellow breaks in southern Spain and garner a little cheer with the news that even those old Christmas cliches - ties - can be a present classic.

## interview



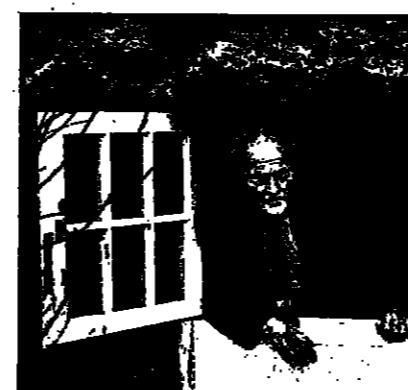
### John Walsh meets ... Griff Rhys Jones

The proto/lad will be plundering laughs in a new version of a Ben Travers farce

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## arts & books



### Glimpsing the divine in Wales

Jan Morris on the Welsh poet R.S. Thomas, laureate of a people's torment

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### The island of 365 beaches ...and Viv

Simon Calder visits Antigua where, after the driving, the biggest danger is the sun

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### Does loyalty buy a happy Christmas?

Nic Cicutti on the incentives offered by credit cards. Are they worth the big spend?

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## Notebook

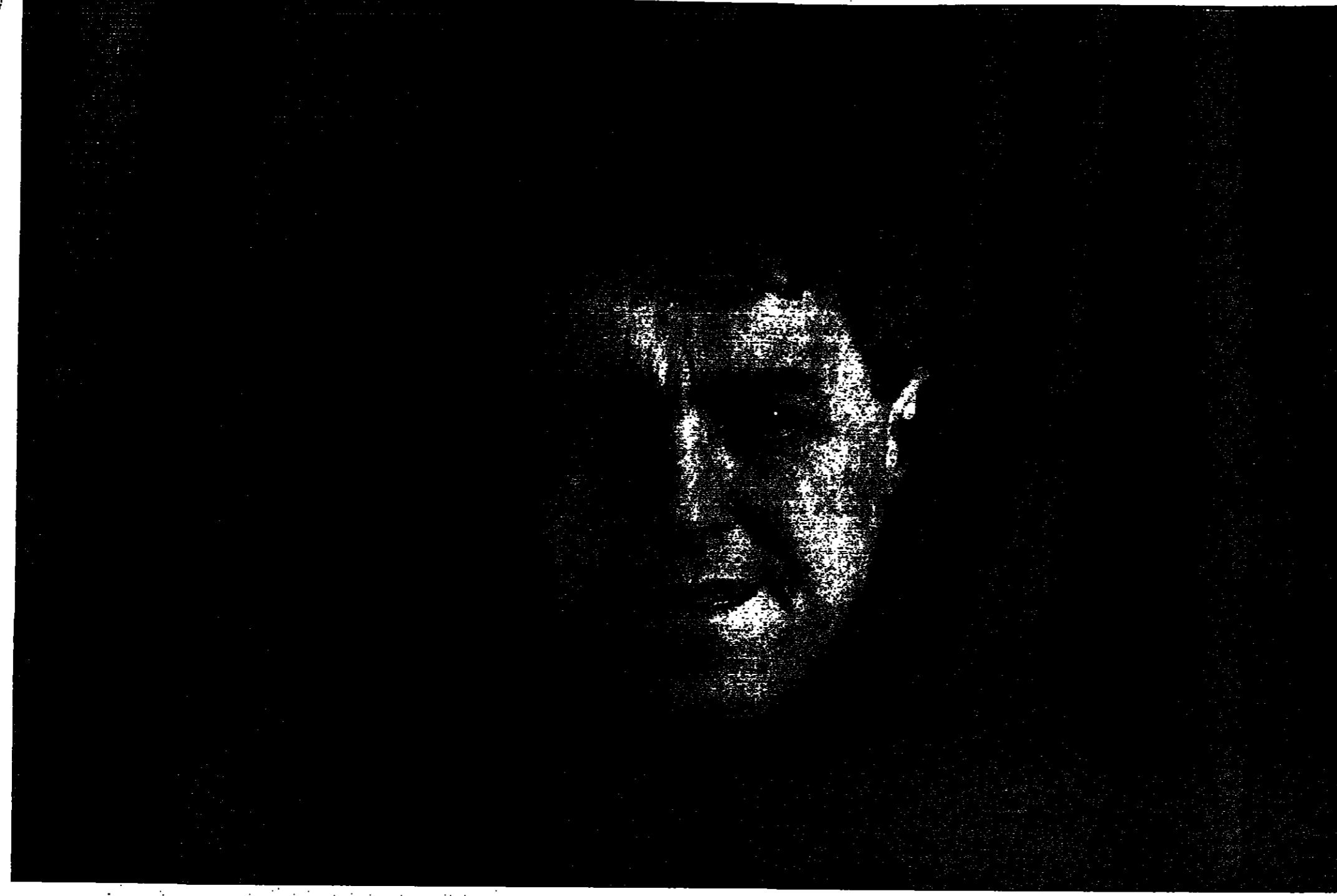
How the Lowestoft tourist board must be glowing with pride and free publicity! Sir Tim Rice, lyricist for *Jesus Christ Superstar*, lets it be known that he prefers a walking holiday there to attending the first night of the musical's revival at the Lyceum. If Sir Tim is the toast of Lowestoft, I can tell him he was also the talk of the after-show party. Even the normally serene Lady Lloyd Webber was moved to tell me that she deplored Sir Tim's absence as it meant that husband Andrew could not go on stage at the end, and therefore the young cast was deprived of photographs with the pair that would have gone round the world.

I might be able to cast some light on the reason for Sir Tim's staying away. Chatting to Robert Stigwood, the impresario who put on the original *Jesus Christ Superstar*, it emerged that Sir Tim might associate first nights with vomiting. According to Stigwood, "Back in the Seventies, Tim was a hypochondriac. After every big first night he immediately became ill."

The best theatre of the week occurred at the Donmar Warehouse where Equity held a press conference to launch a report on the state of subsidised theatre. In the front row sat the secretary general of the Arts Council and two other speakers from her organisation. No sooner had Equity begun than the Arts Council team interrupted and accused them of having their facts wrong. Could it be that the Arts Council had, just a fortnight earlier, published its own state-of-the-nation drama report and did not wish to be outdone?

Whatever the reason, there was a rapid descent into melodrama. Veteran actress Miriam Karlin leapt to her feet to accuse the Arts Council of "succumbing too easily to lottery money". Mary Allen pooh-poohed this. The actress and Equity vice president Charlotte Cornwell twitched with irritation until she could contain herself no longer. "Only now after 28 years in the business have I cleared my debts," she wailed. The whole sorry shambles did little to publicise the plight of regional theatres. On the other hand, if they had intended to show there is dramatic and emotional argument to be found in our theatres, they illustrated their point brilliantly.

In matters of how to win friends and influence people, Kenneth Hudson, director of European Museum of the Year Award and advisor to the European Union on cultural tourism is the *nonpareil*. At a lunch at the Reform Club, Mr Hudson was the guest speaker of the Cyprus Tourist Board. The faces of the 40 or so Greek Cypriots present turned a shade of puce as Mr Hudson lectured them on how the real way to improve tourism was to open up links with the Turkish Cypriots again. He also noted that Cyprus wine used to be "disgusting, really horrible," and was exported to Russia for industrial use. "However," he said beaming at the bottle of red in front of him, "it has clearly drastically improved now". And he toasted their health with the new and improved "Cyprus wine", which, had he read the label, declared itself to be Reform Club Claret.



## A nerd-magnet speaks out

**S**tanding in a corridor on the first floor of the Duke of York barracks in Chelsea, I experienced a curious dual sensation. In this humourless martial building, I was waiting for my lunchtime to appear, and, to while away the time, was reading the notice board. I'd got to a helpful sign advising passers-by about the "Rules of Engagement for service personnel authorised to carry arms and ammunition on duty" in the UK. 1) You may ONLY open fire against a person if...

Glancing up, I found myself watching, through a glass door, a horrible scene unfold in which frantic-looking man in a check shirt and a recidivist's haircut jerkily pursued a young woman around a *chaise longue*. Was it sufficient reason to consider opening fire? No, it was just Griff Rhys Jones rehearsing his new role, as D'Arcy Tuck, a gullible upper-class robber, in Ben Travers's classic farce *Plunder*, which is coming to the Savoy theatre on 2 December; and Mr Rhys Jones is the last comedian you would consider shooting.

He is, everyone agrees, so lovable – so droll, so cuddly, so engagingly dim, so boyishly manic all the time. Most of these emotive judgements come from women, who tend to want to mother the hapless Griff; but he's also hit with a certain type of chap. "What fame has brought me, apart from money and getting a table at Langham's," he says in that steamrollered croak of a voice, "is a lot of odd young men who

want to sit next to me on trains. I've become a nerd-magnet." What do they want to talk to you about? "Oh, a variety of things. Quite often it's 'Can you come and say you're my friend – I'm trying to pick up this girl further up the train'."

He shakes his head sadly. He may have become identified, over the years, through 10 series of *Alas Smith and Jones*, four films, and a string of West End farces, with a certain strain of British twin – the unsmiling, unstoppable anorak, determined to have his way, argue his corner and drive people mad; but he has no time for real-life nerds – or lads. I tried to float the theory that his and Mel Smith's celebrated head-to-head conversations about gross male topics, from flavoured condoms to body piercing, ushered in a new era of unbuttoned discussion that led to *Men Behaving Badly* 10 years on. Were he and Mel Smith proto-Lads? Would he accept responsibility for *Loaded* magazine?

"We have been accused of being at the yob end of the humour market. But we were never as extreme as *The Young Ones*, say. There was just a general opening up, at the time, of what could be said. But surely," he says with a disgusted squawk, "loaded magazine is the saddest thing you could read." What about Benedict and Beatrice? "Oh all right, since the Restoration. After that, suddenly everything went off into male bonding. And women reverted, from having any independence at all, to becoming just figures the men can lust after."

His new role as D'Arcy Tuck in *Plunder* is a classic Griff role. "He's not quite Bertie Wooster, because he's more nervous, and more complicated. He's someone who's terribly polite, but also very nervous, so he keeps saying terribly rude things to people..." And – though it's an odd riff to hear from an accomplished farceur who was such a hit in *Charley's Aunt* – he is keen to emphasise that it isn't really a farce. This, you come to realise, is because he was fed a diet of Brian Rix's Whitehall farces on television when young, about which he is scathing. Ben Travers, he says, by contrast with Feydeau or Wodehouse, doesn't follow many of the rules comic characters are supposed to. "There's a moment in his play *Thark* when the chap is with his girl, who suspects him of cheating, and he says, 'No, I love you, Kitty, I love you so much, I can't explain to you. I was walking home the other night and I was saying your name over and over again, Kitty, Kitty, Kitty, Kitty, and when I got to my gate there were 15 cats behind me...' That



John Walsh meets... Griff Rhys Jones

line would only be put in by *Plunder*. Feydeau would never dream of it."

Rhys Jones's sweetly confiding cackle is contagious. He is a performer who, when off-stage, radiates a controlled frenzy of amusement; his conversation always a hairtrigger away from hysteria.

The press release for *Plunder* guardedly describes him as a "leading exponent of comedy" rather than either a comedian

**"Fame has brought me a lot of odd young men who want to sit next to me on trains"**

group of 10 or 11 people ever since we left Cambridge". The group includes Clive Anderson, Rory McGrath of *They Think It's All Over* fame, the actor Jimmy Mulville and the National Theatre director Nick Hytner, although his original associates also included the present secretary general of the Arts Council, Mary Allen. Of course, he's not the only one to be very entertaining.

He was born in 1953 in Cardiff, but moved, at six months old, to Scotland. His mother was a nurse, his father a doctor, and the short-tousered Griff's summers were spent in the unpromising, but evocative surroundings of the "Essex Riviera" – places like Clacton and Walton and Frinton, the pub-free home of seafarers come from"; c) mention of his famous namesake, Sophie, the fiancée of Prince Edward – they're not related but the Sun once rang up Griff's uncle at 3am just to ask; and d) enquiries about his Christian name.

He admits to having inherited a few Welsh traits over the years ("like neuroticism, over-reaction and defensiveness") but most especially a determination to drink to excess. "I'm happy to say I have no control over my appetites. I could never have two drinks and say, 'Thanks, that's enough,'" he says. "The Welsh drink only to get drunk, like Dylan Thomas, like the Fijians. If I started, I'd go on until I was under the table." He did, in fact, give up alcohol 12 years ago, not because it was ruining his liver, but because "by the age of 30, I reckoned that I'd already drunk my allotted life's worth. Everyone is allowed a certain amount in their lives, and you can either drink it quickly, like me, or spread it over the years. As you get older, what you want to talk about is life, death, art, views. You don't necessarily want to sit around while someone gets off on a roll..."

Growing up also involved getting married (to Jo, a graphic designer, 14 years ago) and having children, (George, 11, and Catherine, 9), acquiring vintage cars and writing sentimental articles about his desire to conserve the Essex coastline of his childhood summers, if necessary by the expedient of buying up whole towns with his vast wealth. Between this, the Arthur Ransome connection and the "new" 1928 farce, it's easy to see Mr Rhys Jones as probably the most old-fashioned comedian in the country, after Sir Roy Strong.

He's never been exactly alternative. And now he worries about becoming a vintage model himself at the grand old age of 43, as he watches wave after wave of new young scriptwriters all trying to be funny for a living. They come, they go, writing sketches for *Alas Smith and Jones* and departing. "We suffer a bit on *Alas*, by being a little tired for some writers – they'd rather write for *The Fast Show* or Harry Hill or Alexei [Sayle], who's slightly more hip. We passed through a phase, not long ago, when we were like Deep Purple, you know, so old we'd almost come out the other end and become tip again." Apart from age, Mr Rhys Jones gets all embarrassed at a) praise; b) memories of some disgraceful episodes in his career, like the time in *Charley's Aunt* when, exasperated by the old ladies' chorus in the front row, he ad-libbed the play's most famous line to become, "I'm Charley's aunt from Brazil – where the n-n-n-gazi war

**Poet uses computer**

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**Archaeologist discovers thesaurus**

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See The Independent Magazine page 51.

# arts & books

Mario Puzo on the lure of Mob lore. By Tom Dewe Mathews

## Pasta with panache

**M**ario Puzo's new book takes up from where *The Godfather* left off. So instead of just putting a horse's head on a movie mogul's pillow, we now have the entire Mob wanting to jump into bed with Hollywood. And just as Johnny Fontane, the Mafia-connected crooner from *The Godfather*, reminded readers of Frank Sinatra, so Puzo's *The Last Don* will also provoke parallels with the Mob's real-life moves on Tinseltown. Not that Puzo himself will admit it.

"Hollywood's too tough for the Mafia," growls the 75-year-old author down the line from his Long Island home. "There's too much money involved in the movie business," he explains. "Those Hollywood guys aren't scared of the Mafia, they're not scared of the government, they're not scared of anything." But then Puzo, in a slow-talking, mid-Manhattan accent – which elongates Mafia into Ma-fia – complicates the issue by conceding that "the Mafia don't want to own the cow they're milking. They want somebody else to own the cow. Then they milk it for themselves. Otherwise it's too much trouble."

Throughout our conversation, Puzo makes it quite clear that this unholy alliance between the movies and the Mob is almost as old as Hollywood itself. From Thirties mobster "Bugsy" Siegel's "offer of protection to the movie moguls", through to "the Cleveland syndicate's wartime suppression of [Hollywood] unions", up to "the Gennaros' gang's current control of porn movies", apparently every Mafia Family wants – or has wanted – to make Hollywood an offer it can't refuse. But this native of New York's Hell's Kitchen and long-time frequenter of the Las Vegas casinos doggedly refuses to admit to any personal knowledge of Mob shenanigans. The wily Don of the Mafia novel plays devil's advocate by insisting that the studio takeover in *The Last Don* is "complete fiction on my part. That would never happen in real life."

Because, as Puzo repeatedly insists, real-life studio chiefs are more than a match for the hardest of Dons. "It has to do with personal power. You have a great house, you have everything you want: women, jacuzzis, cars, airplanes. So the stakes are very high. You're willing to risk more. I think the Mafia is a little scared of that power. They can't just knock off the head of a studio all the time. It's too big a jump. There would be too much of an uproar. Hollywood, after all, is very well plugged into Washington. A lot of money goes to Washington – especially during elections. So the FBI would take special pains."

Not that Puzo himself is overawed by Hollywood. Indeed, not long ago he told me that he had successfully sued two studios for loss of profits on his screenplays for *Superman* and *Earthquake*. He is also disturbed by the town's pretentiousness and flashy style; to confirm his distaste he describes a meeting with one of Hollywood's most stylish gangsters. "Whenever I see a guy with panache," he says, "I get scared. Now, Joey Gallo had panache. He wanted me to write his autobiography. I ran like a thief. I told my publisher he would be

dead in six months. And he was. I knew he would be killed because he had too much panache. More pasta and less panache is a good saying to remember."

For any follower of real hoodlums in Hollywood, Puzo is a gold mine of good stories: "Ah, Johnny 'Don Giovanni' Roselli... Yeah, I met him. He produced B-movies for Warners – ended up in a dumpster in Florida." He does, however, make one specific exception to his intriguing dips into Tinseltown crime. "Sure, Frank Sinatra hung out with Mafia guys; but whether he was really mixed up with them, who knows? Maybe it's because I admire him, I'm prejudiced." Unfortunately for Puzo, though, Sinatra has not returned the compliment. The legendary swinger from Hoboken has now become almost interchangeable in the public mind with *The Godfather*'s singer Johnny Fontane, and for this reason Frank Sinatra gave Puzo a tongue-lashing when they finally met a couple of years ago at the Hollywood restaurant Chasen's. Of the incident, Puzo has said, "The worst thing he called me was a pimp"; and perhaps it was this insult that provokes Puzo, during our transatlantic conversation, to drop in a story that shows Sinatra in a less than favourable light.

But like those cunning old Sicilian hoods in his novels, Puzo bides his time. In the midst of spelling out his latest book's overall theme of the assimilation of the Mob into mainstream America – "those old-time Mafia men, who got into Vegas when it started; they never went back to Mafia stuff. Carl Cohen, for instance, one of the nice guys, ran the Sands' casino..." – he suddenly interrupts himself. "Cohen punched out Sinatra." Why? "Sinatra had just lost his girlfriend. He was drunk and tearing around the hotel breaking everything up. Carl came out and told him to cool down. So Sinatra turns to his bodyguards and screams, 'Get him! But the bodyguards knew who Cohen was. 'Not us, they moaned. So Frank took a swipe – and missed. Carl didn't, though. He punched him out – split Sinatra's lip and knocked the caps off his two front teeth. Later on, I asked Cohen what had happened. And all he would say was, 'That was sooooo unfortunate.' Such good manners," Puzo proudly recalls. "He didn't want to brag. But he was a certified killer."

With friends like this, it's not surprising that most people believe Puzo is a Mafia "made man". Even Johnny Russell, the Mob-financed film producer, in his first meeting with Puzo insisted, "Admit it, Puzo, you're one of the guys." So how does the writer himself react to this confessional? Is he irritated? "Nah," he says. "I'm amused, because I'm the kind of guy that can't even kill a mouse. The only violent thing I ever did was sue those two movie studios when they didn't pay my profits." But how would all his readers react if they knew that the father of *The Godfather* hadn't been privy to the inner councils of the Mafia Don?

"Maybe we shouldn't tell them," decides Mario Puzo.

*The Last Don* is published by William Heinemann at £15.99



And the winner of the Marlon Brando lookalike contest...? Mario Puzo

The turbulent poet:  
Jan Morris in praise of  
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## The wall of silence – and how to get round it

**A**t around half-past one last Tuesday afternoon, during *The World At One*, Nick Clarke was interviewing David Philips, chief constable of Kent and chairman of the Association of Chief Police Officers, on the subject of banning knives when the line went dead.

Clarke took a very brief moment to collect himself and then explained what had happened: "I seem to have lost all communication with him. And, indeed, with everyone. [A pause.] I don't know whether anyone can hear me at all. [A longer pause.] At the moment I am in complete non-communication with everyone... At the moment I can hear no one and speak to no one. [Another pause.] At the moment, I still can't communicate with anybody. I have been cut off in my studio. There's a lot of anxiety here..."

As where is there not? As a summary of the futility of the human condition this can hardly be beaten: alone, talking into the silence, struggling to keep a hold on composure and meaning, while all the time not knowing whether the struggle has any point. Hone the prose a bit (and under the circumstances, it was reasonably well honed to start with: no swearing, at any rate) and it's practically textbook Beckett: I can't go on. I'll go on.

What this rather gripping incident highlighted, aside from Clarke's coolness in the face of catastrophe, was the utter isolation of the radio broadcaster, the complete disconnection from the outside world. Alone in a noiseless and (usually) windowless studio, headphones jammed on ears, the broadcaster



Robert Hanks  
on Radio

knows nothing but what he hears from a producer who is in turn tucked away behind glass, or down the telephone line. It's not surprising that some of them adopt such flagrant tactics to keep themselves from being spooked. Listen to the

unnatural affection of the Jamesons, clinging together in the goblin-infested night-time, or to Chris Evans and his breakfast crew yattering away, scrabbling at the encroaching silence like dogs at the back door.

Not surprising, either, that some broadcasters resort to this imprisonment in unforeseen and unlikable ways – lapsing, like Scott Chisholm on Talk Radio, into solipsism. One of Chisholm's most intriguing quirks is that, when any current news story is under discussion, he magnificently pooh-poohs any version his callers may have come across: the one that he has read in his paper becomes canonical, a rock of fact in the stormy sea of opinion, simply by virtue of his having read it.

Possibly this detachment from

reality and the consequent absence of any points of reference contributes to the mild surrealism of his language, the way that imagery sometimes goes into freefall. One typical opening riff – a couple of weeks ago, this just happened to be the one I managed to take down at the time – ran like this: the morality bandwagon rolls on... it's swept up guns and knives, and now the spotlight is on that evergreen, violence on TV... three MPs have jumped on the bandwagon, each firing a broadside at the broadcasters...

Is this a case of mixing his metaphors or just taking his clichés straight? Either way, in the public heat that is Talk Radio UK, the man has earned his stool, personally engraved tankard and bag of crisps. Prawn-flavoured would be appropriate.

## Gotta learn the langwidge



Jasper Rees  
on Television

like a thoroughbred horse, a television personality is the work of genetic engineers, the fruit of a human being's coition with a television camera. The lens's latest crush is on Ian Wright, the presenter of *Lonely Planet* (C4 Fri), a travel programme that gives you none of that pifff about tour operators and air fares. Wright works far harder to entrap than enlighten. He chats the camera up as if he's trying to get it in bed.

If there's still such a thing as BBC English, Wright speaks what you could call ITV English, a multiple choice of regional variants. In Wright's case, it's a rubbish tip of glottal stops and Cockney elisions. He sounds and looks uncannily like Tony Parsons's kid bruiser, God, or the East End, gave them both a high-eyed, wide-boned face and a 750-horse-power outboard mouth. Signing off from Greenland, he uncharacteristically concluded that "there ain't even words that come close", which felt like a cop-out until he hopped off the helicopter. The chopper, with camera on board, pulled away and Wright shrank to a small speechless dot on a vast white expanse. Even from that distance, he definitely had a thing going with the lens.

There comes a point, though, when a television personality can get in the way. Gary Rhodes, not to be confused with his less telegenic namesake Cecil, returned with *Open Rhodes* (BBC2 Wed). It's as plain as mud that Rhodes's electric-chair coiff is a publicity stunt, but it does not impede his mission to give British cuisine the thumbs up – this week he was in the Highlands. Malcolm Gluck (is the surname a gimmick too?) attempted to do the same to English wine in *Gluck, Gluck, Gluck* (BBC2 Fri). "Greets you with a polite peck on the cheek," he said of a Cotswoold white, which, given his taste for hyperbole, sounded like a slap in the face.

Rhodes and Gluck are food and wine's yobbo tendency. experts hired from the wrong

overview	GERAINT LEWIS	LAURIE LEWIS	GERAINT LEWIS
	THE PLAY Old Wicked Songs	THE OPERA Die Soldaten	THE MUSICAL Jesus Christ Superstar
	Jon Maran's Pulitzer-nominated play, about a blocked piano prodigy (James Callis) who learns about art, politics, suffering and joy while studying with a Viennese singing teacher (Bob Hoskins).	The British premiere of Bernd Alois Zimmermann's legendary 1965 opera for 100-plus orchestra, large cast, split stage and three film screens, directed by David Freeman and conducted by Elgar Howarth.	Gale Edwards directs, John Napier designs and Steve Balsamo and Zubin Varla star in the 25th-anniversary revival of the rock opera that put Lloyd Webber and Rice on the international map.
	Paul Taylor enjoyed the performances but shook his head at a "schmaltzy personal growth saga that passes for profundity". "Contrived, clumsy and emotionally hollow," agreed the <i>Telegraph</i> . "As a musical masterclass it is beguiling," conceded the <i>Guardian</i> . "Hoskins and Callis build up a tremendous rapport," applauded the <i>FT</i> . "A blast of serious pleasure," drooled the <i>Standard</i> . "A rare experience," nodded the <i>Jewish Chronicle</i> .	Adrian Jack admitted that "there's every appeal to the audience's baser instincts... the music is far less striking than its reputation". "Fatally unsophisticated and reductive of the drama's sensibility," argued the <i>Telegraph</i> . "Demonstrating clearly what ENO is all about and why we need it," saluted the <i>Times</i> . "Anyone concerned about the future of opera and not too prejudiced by tune-free zones should catch it," advised the <i>Standard</i> .	Edward Seckerson eulogised over "a blast. From the past. Only better." "How raw and fresh both the music and the production seem," cried the <i>Telegraph</i> . "Finally, when those exulting chords of the tremendous title song sound... <i>Superstar</i> reaches a savage high," conceded the <i>Standard</i> . "Freshness and exuberance lacking in later works... fails to convince that <i>Superstar</i> is better staged than listened to," felt the <i>Guardian</i> .
critical view	Booking to March at the Gielgud Theatre, London W1 (0171-494 5065)	Tonight and 26, 28 Nov, 5, 10, 12 Dec at ENO, The Coliseum, London WC2 (0171-632 8300)	At the newly-refurbished Lyceum Theatre, London WC2 (0171-656 1803)
on view	Compared to the dramatic subtleties of Art, this is painting by numbers.	A fascinating experiment. Bouquets to the singers and orchestra.	A knockout revival.
our view			



# Knee-high, short shrift

## THEATRE Elsinore

Nottingham Playhouse and touring

Even with rivets intact, something is still rotten in the state of Robert Lepage's hi-tec Hamlet. By Paul Taylor

**M**y taxi from the station to Nottingham Playhouse had to go on quite a detour because, as the driver explained, the celebrity switch-on of the Christmas street lights was taking place. My God, I thought, let's hope the celebrity isn't Robert Lepage, or they'll fuse on the spot. An unworthy notion, perhaps, but one I couldn't resist since this French-Canadian theatre wizard is in town with *Elsinore*, the solo show that had to be pulled from this year's Edinburgh Festival when a gremlin, in the shape of a faulty rivet, put the high-tech production into abort mode.

Now belatedly unveiled in Britain, *Elsinore* suggests that it is not just Lepage's rivets that are faulty. Theatre folk sometimes like to talk sentimentally of their art as constituting "two planks and a passion". With Lepage, it's more a case of "a million computer projections, an infra-red surveillance camera, an *environnement sonore*, a harness, consulting scenery, an optional mud bath and a passion". Nothing necessarily wrong with that. Theatre of Poverty is only one kind of theatre. But does all the technical dazzle here help take you on a journey into Hamlet's soul? No, it takes you on a scary safari into Lepage's human limitations.

Like Coleridge ("I have a smack of Hamlet myself, if I may say so...") and just about everybody else, Lepage projects himself on to this Shakespearean hero. "Isn't it an absence of blind passion that prevents Hamlet from doing what he has to do?" asks Lepage in a programme note. "Some might say this isn't the most important paradox in Hamlet's nature; but for me, it's the only one, because it's the one I share." The puerile solipsism of that is quite barking and, besides, there's surely a difference between an absence of *blind* passion and being weirdly passionate.

So what's on offer, spectacle-wise? Well, a lot of fairly familiar Lepagean tricks. His interest in making you look at things through slots and apertures – as in his production of *Coriolanus*, where, at certain crucial moments, you were allowed to see the hero's knees but not his face – is again strongly in evidence here, with the twist that, because Lepage has to be everybody in the play, these apertures now

allow for a partially visible stand-in. So when Polonius waylays Hamlet in a library (cue projections of book shelves over the three screens), we see just the legs of the stand-in Hamlet on a wobbling library ladder, while Lepage as Polonius jabbars away to the knees. When Desmond Barrit scurries about playing both Antipholus twins in an RSC production of *The Comedy of Errors*, it was utterly in keeping with the nature of that play. But Lepage's equivalent stunts here (coming on and off from behind a screen as alternately Hamlet and Laertes in the final fencing match) create a peculiarly tricky detachment that feels grotesquely at variance with the tone of this drama.

If you removed all the technicalities, Lepage's creepily affectless performance might put you in mind of someone who had gone mad and now imagined he was Peter Sellers, who had, in turn, gone mad and now imagined he was the entire cast of *Hamlet*. Playing a hero who has "that within which passeth show", Lepage paradoxically, as Sellers often did, gives you the disturbing feeling that there is nothing inside.

Watching all these hello-I-must-be-going, conceptually cross-eyed imagistic antics, with Lepage often both on-stage and backstage at the same time (courtesy of a film camera), I suddenly remembered the comedian Harry Worth's body-pressed-against-shop-window mirror-image semaphore at the start of his old TV show. Now that had a bit of feeling. The second-night audience with whom I saw *Elsinore* absolutely loved it but, with respect, I submit that the experience they enjoyed was more akin to "An Evening with David Copperfield", the magician, than an evening of serious directorial vision such as you get with a Peter Brook or a Deborah Warner.

A friend of mine made the astute remark that Cliff Richard's stage musical *Heathcliff* is already the video. *Elsinore*, if it had a bit more interactivity, would be well on the way to being its own CD Rom. *At Nottingham Playhouse tonight (0115 941 9419); then touring Newcastle Playhouse 27-30 Nov (0191-230 5151); Glasgow Tramway 3-7 Dec (0141-287 3900); Cambridge Arts Theatre 11-14 Dec (01223 503333); RNT, London 4-11 Jan (0171-928 2252)*



Lepage's lunatic antics: 'like a Peter Sellers gone mad, who imagines he can play the entire cast of "Hamlet"'

Taras Kovaly / Page One

# Hair today, Dagon tomorrow

## CLASSICAL MUSIC Samson St John's Smith Square, London

**F**or the sake of a neat review, it would be simple to present Harry Christophers as a master of *Samson*'s powerfully dramatic music, while finding his interpretation wanting in its response to the introvert, reflective mood of the oratorio's first act. The lugubrious recitations and indulgent speeds set for the first-act arias suggested the triumph of time over truth, or at least of time over the underlying drama of *Samson*'s imprisement and the subjugation of his people. But Christophers' vision of the work depended on its gradual increase in tension and the development of strong characters, clearly shared by his magnificent solo team and alert continuo group.

Opinions concerning the imminent extinction of that rare breed, the intelligent singer of English Oratorio, can be checked at least while Catherine Wyn-Rogers, Thomas Randle and Michael George remain in business. Randle has developed an attractively rich, almost baritonal sound-quality of late, without losing clarity in the upper reaches of his

fine tenor, or any flexibility. Here was a Samson with attitude, memorably dismissing his venal wife Dalila and at his heroic best in "Your Charms to Ruin Led the Way". The second-act confrontation between Randle, wearing a black leather penguin suit, and Jonathan Best's robust Harapha might almost have been stage-managed by Don King, a compelling contest between two vocal heavyweights.

Wyn-Rogers' expressive singing proved the benefit of a large, colourful voice, clearly focused and faultless in its production, to the performance of early music. Her genuinely *bel canto* delivery of "Return, O God of Hosts" highlighted the need for passionate singing in Handel, even when romantic excesses have been stripped away from the phrasing and subtlety supplant extravagance. Likewise, Michael George plumbed the emotional depths of Manoa's final aria with acute sensitivity to the text.

The telescoping and adaptation of Milton's *Samson Agonistes* by Newburgh Hamilton offers up a few poten-

tial hostages to misfortune, not least in the matter-of-fact delivery of Samson's death or his parting line. "I begin to feel some inward motions, which bid me to go". Handel's audiences no doubt drew breath on hearing the news of how the Israelite destroyed the temple of Dagon and ended his life; their modern counterparts, raised on Hollywood biblical epics, may feel short-changed by the oratorio's brief, second-hand outline of Samson's demise. Any want of drama here is abundantly compensated for by the dignity of Handel's music, highlighted with moving compassion by Christophers and his performers. The "Dead March", with its eerie mix of horns, kettle-drums, strings and chamber organ, was raised here to the epitome of grief, a painful, very personal, yet public expression of the composer's feelings. Elsewhere, the choristers of The Sixteen matched the committed singing style of the solo team, contributing powerfully to this outstanding performance.

Andrew Stewart

# Not just Texas-fried turkey

## FOLK Guy Clark Elmwood Hall, Belfast

**G**uy Clark started life in a one-horse town in west Texas and, kicking off with the still definitive *Old No 1* in 1975, has thus far slipped out a taut eight albums in 21 years. This, combined with a fine line in Clint Eastwood-like "man-with-no-name" demeanour, amounts to a text-book approach to forging and maintaining a certain kind of songwriting reputation. A legion of better-known artists such as Nanci Griffith, Emmylou Harris, Vince Gill and Lyle Lovett have feted Clark's name, guested on his albums on something close to rent-a-devotee numbers and covered his material for years. Yet the man seems doomed to play out the role of quintessential cult figure.

And a role it is, for while fellow Lone Star legend Townes Van Zandt just had to turn up (in body if not in mind) at this venue a year ago to generate an electric atmosphere, Clark had to work on stage. He obligingly donned the porous raincoat of his "living legend" status –

however ridiculous it must seem to him on a day-to-day basis – and harmlessly fortified it with wry witcisms, body language and a little gentle sparring with the audience. Where Van Zandt is a genuine wild card, a vacationing-on-Venus maverick, Clark is simply a better-than-average craftsman who never shoves his way around Nashville and always called himself a folk-singer anyway.

Whatever his generic preference, Clark proved himself a good entertainer, eliciting a warm response in a cavernous, charisma-sapping auditorium, largely used for Ulster Orchestra rehearsals. "Feels like a church in here," he mused. "Nobody throwin' stuff..."

Accompanied by his son Travis, whose superb, melodic work on the fretless bass added welcome textural depth to essentially simple chord progressions, Clark encouraged requests and got them by the bagful. His guitar playing was rudimentary and his actual guitar sound quite horrible, but when it all connected with

Colin Harper



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# With God where the cuckoos sing

Jan Morris praises the turbulent poet who loves his ideal Wales and hates Brummie vowels

Furious Interiors: Wales, R. S. Thomas and God by Justin Wintle, HarperCollins, £20

**T**is an impertinence to say so, but I think I understand R. S. Thomas. He is an undoubted poetical genius and an Anglican priest, I am a libberlibberlibber prose-writer and a pagan pantheist, but we have things in common. Like many other Welsh persons, from Dafydd ap Gwilym to Saunders Lewis, we long ago both reached the conclusion, or perhaps the device, that we could glimpse the divine in the matter of Wales – not Wales as it is today, but a Wales with its language unthreatened, its landscapes unspoilt, its people still serene in their own beliefs and loyalties.

It was, in short, an existentialist Wales that we envisioned. Both of us, in our different ways, set out to restore it if we could, to protect what was left of it. We both became, in fact, what Justin Wintle characterises in an untypical moment of sneer as "Welsh nationalists, or patriots, or whatever else they choose to call themselves".

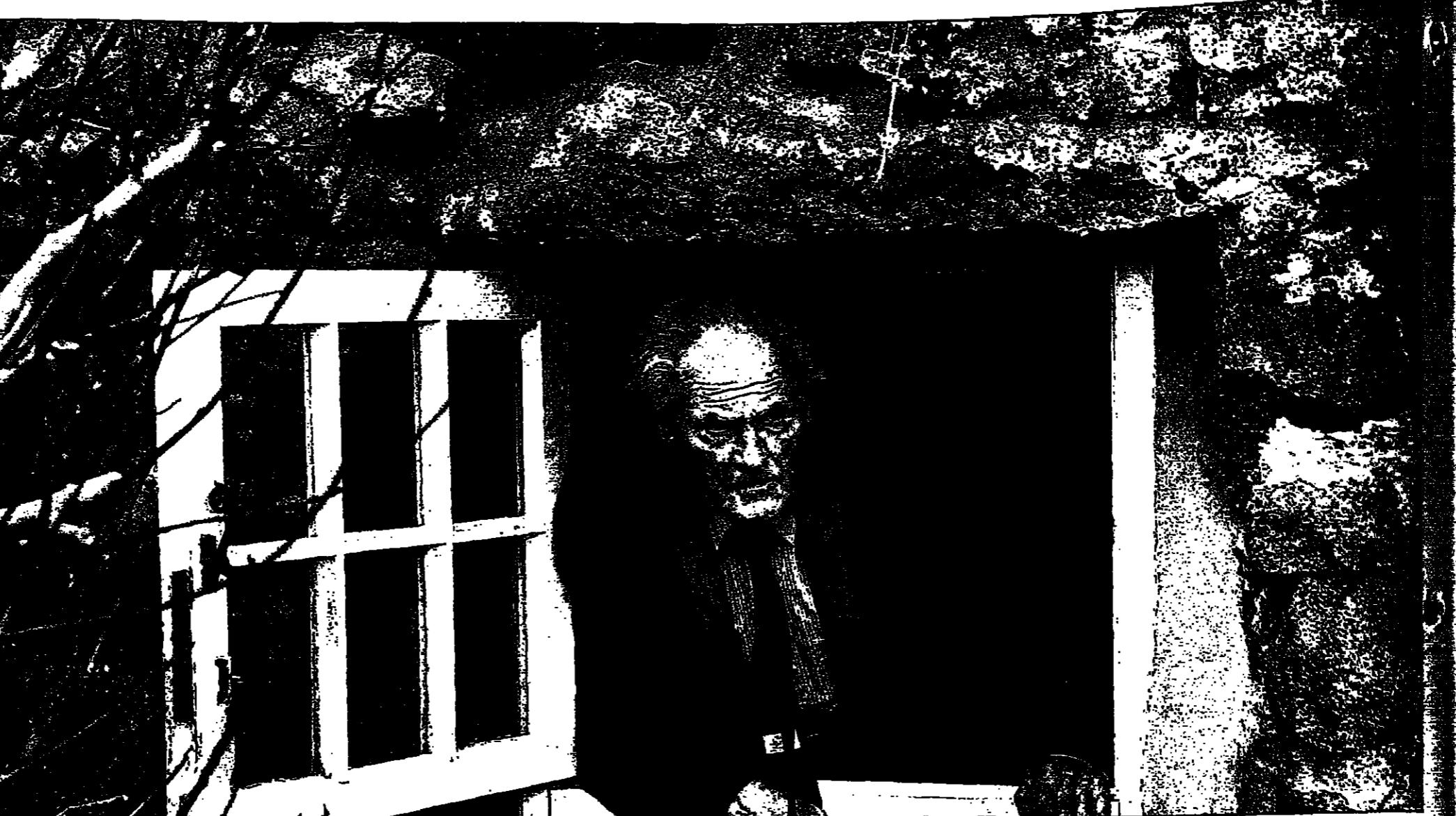
Not only Welsh people, of course, cherish this enchantment – I have heard Egyptians talk of their country in similar trance – but in Wales it is perhaps more intoxicating because of our circumstances. Ours is a place of constant torment, torn by doubt. Is it necessary to speak Welsh to be properly Welsh? When is violence, or even unpleasantness, justified to protect Welshness? Is it racism to want to keep English people out, when they are perverting the national character? Should we aim at an entirely Welsh-speaking enclave in the north-west, and let the rest go hang? What is Welshness, anyway?

At one level of his art, R. S. Thomas is the laureate of these torments. He did not learn Welsh until he was a grown man, he writes all his poetry in English, but his dream has been of an entirely Welsh-speaking society restored to its old simplicity. Wintle skilfully and sympathetically explores this preoccupation, as expressed in Thomas's verse as in his life, and in doing so exposes many a nerve in the sensibilities of people like me. R. S. Thomas says things we are ashamed of thinking.

He detests the vowel-sounds of Birmingham immigrants, and so do we. He hates tourism in almost all its forms, together with electric pylons and all manifestations of the game-show-and-lottery civilisation. He despises Welsh people who do not stand up for their language and their history, but fawningly knuckle under. He believes it is perfectly justifiable to be nasty about the English or to the English – if it will make them go away. When he looks through a Welsh window and declares the beauty outside to be "for the few and chosen", not for the crowd that "dirty the window with their breathing", we know just what he means.

We are perhaps ashamed, but Thomas never is. He is defending not merely his country and his culture, but his God. He is like one of the old fighting saints, born to martyrdom. If it is hypocritical for a Christian to live by *seva* *indignatio*, then Christ was a hypocrite too, when he toppled the tables in the temple. Thomas apparently prefers the word "Christ" to the word "Jesus": it is more flinty, more ice-like.

As one might imagine, he himself was not uni-



R S Thomas: "seeing the unseeable"

HOWARD BARLOW

versally appreciated as a parish priest, holding the forthright opinions that he did. But he was assiduous in visiting the sick and the poor, however remote their farms and cottages (though perhaps a little more assiduous, it is sneakily suggested, if they happened to be Welsh-speaking). His poems are often considered, especially by English readers, as essentially nationalist works of almost incongruous beauty; but English readers do not understand the nature of our patriotism or nationalism, or whatever we choose to call it.

Nor, I think, does Justin Wintle. His analyses of Thomas's art are perceptive, and learned, and often beautifully expressed, but by the nature of things he does not share their sense of yearning and despair. He spends much time, somewhat

embarrassingly recalled, in the company of the sort of English-speaking Welshmen who call each other "boy" and talk a lot about getting pissed ("What an arsehole", says one of these friends about R. S. Thomas, "what a total arsehole"). He reports with apparent approval the responses of Welsh-speaking Welshmen who resent Thomas's more outrageous kind of patriotism. Wintle lives in Pembrokeshire, knows a great deal about Welshness and Welsh history, but patently does not experience the transcendental sense of longing that is contained in the old Welsh fancy of "Abercuawg, where the cuckoos sing" – an aspiration-land, a dream, a Kierkegaardian Wales of our imaginations.

I admired this book without much liking it. I thought it was fine when it bore itself as literary crit-

icism, often in line-by-line glossings of the poems, and fair and sensible when it turned to history or politics. But I disliked something prying about it, something almost tabloid, when it set out to be biography. Thomas did not want a biography written and, so far as I can tell, Wintle has never met him. The book depends upon second-hand information and speculation, and this leads it into inquiries that seem to me distasteful.

"How much was true and how much false?" Wintle himself asks once. "How much tit-tat-tat, and how much justified resentment?" A biographer should not be asking such questions towards the end of his book; and it is not enough to suggest, as Wintle does on the next page, that none of it much matters "compared with what he has written".

As it happens I agree, but in that case, there is not much point in writing a biography that depends so much upon hearsay. Wintle seems to me dead right, though, in the order of his subtitle – Wales, R. S. Thomas, God. I do not doubt that the course of this poet's art has taken him from Abercuawg through self-examination to the profoundest revelations of all. R. S. Thomas dismisses the idea of himself as a mystic, on the grounds that his encounters with the divine have not been direct, but filtered through poetry. But I do not for a moment doubt that this great and disconcerting artist, as he looks through that grubby small window and picks up his pen to write, has seen the unseeable. For to us pantheists art itself, like Abercuawg, is God.

## The American way of death

D J Taylor on the literary star who died, as he lived, in the limelight

This Wild Darkness: The Story of My Death by Harold Brodkey, Fourth Estate, £14.99

**H**arold Brodkey's story, propagated as much by himself as his many acolytes, is well known. The Jewish boy from the mid-west heads for New York, writes a handful of limlessly promising short stories and then spends the next three decades living off his reputation. Part of this is to do with legendary powers of physical attraction: Brodkey's countless juvenile amours are supposed to have included a fling with Marilyn Monroe. Much more, though, has to do with an unpublished masterpiece – the subject of fevered press and party gossip – whose composition takes up the greater part of its author's adult life.

What follows is a savage parable of literary ambition. *The Ramona Soul*, finally presented to the critics in 1991, gets indifferent notices. To the indignity of not being acclaimed as a genius (a second novel, *Profane Friendship*, does not better) is added serious illness, belatedly diagnosed as AIDS.

The sheer scope of Brodkey's self-love may come as a shock to anyone who hasn't previously witnessed the spectacle of an American literary lion preening himself in public. There is, for instance, his habit of considering people mostly

in terms of their relation to himself (his wife gets apostrophised as "My human essential"); there are the sexual look-backs ("I cannot find in memory a day in my life without some... me or other"), not to mention some over-cooked epigrams about the human condition: "Life is a kind of horror"; "History is a scandal, as are life and death."

One tries to remember, while reading this non-sense, that these are the thoughts of a desperately sick man dying from an illness whose implications and – Brodkey being Brodkey – mythical properties hung over every moment of his waking life. But one ought also to bear in mind that Brodkey wrote it for publication and that he undoubtedly regarded it as a testimony to his ideals and beliefs.

This isn't to condemn the resulting 177 pages out of hand, or to ignore the inability of the author to answer back. For when Brodkey gets onto the subject of his rural hideaway, figures

from his childhood, shared confidences with his wife and doctor (an immensely decent-sounding man named Barry) or some of the differences between Britain and America – whenever he can stop talking about himself in fact – there are moments of awful clarity. Watching part of a bird's flight arc, for instance, "I feel myself shiver and swiftly break into clusters of flight. Sometimes the wind seems to enter me."

At bottom, though, *This Wild Darkness* is simply another of the many 20th-century exercises in benefit of clergy. Its sub-text, baldly stated, is that one is – or should be – allowed to do pretty much as one likes because one is an artist.

At times Brodkey makes this point directly, as when he tells his wife that "We are cowards and artists and are in flight and are have to be awful people to get our work done", or decides that "a writer is alone, is a sacrificial beast and madman (or madwoman) and fool". To which you want to retort that no genuine artist ever lost

anything by behaving like an ordinary person, and that even Proust presumably breathed the same air as his fellow Parisians.

There is a grimmer truth on display here, however. That is the complete inability of this post-modern, milk-and-water humanism, this refined, urban, liberal sensibility, to come to terms with the simple fact of mortality. Diagnosed as terminally ill, Brodkey records "What was strange was that all sense of presence, all sense of poetry and style, all sense of idea left me."

But what is strange about not being able to bring a sense of style to your own death? Enmeshed in the world of Manhattan literary parties and *New Yorker* back-scratching (at which he characteristically rails), Brodkey lost touch with the notion of ordinariness at a very early stage in his career. Now that it is over, the temptation to mark him down as another literary casualty laid low by a particular kind of urban artistic life is irresistible.

## Magnificent Father mine, that pony does not come

Sue Gaisford contrasts surly sons and doting dads

Sons & Mothers edited by Matthew and Victoria Glendinning, Virago, £16.99

Fathers: An Anthology edited by Louise Guinness, Chatto, £16.99

**W**omen tell me," writes Michael Bywater, "that the joy and delight in having produced a male child, something so different from them, can in time be partially or even wholly overwhelmed by the sheer horror of having produced... something so different." These women could be right. Victoria Glendinning produced four male children, of whom one, Matthew, has helped her compile an anthology about having – and being – a son. Their two essays provide uneasy book-ends to the varied, often embarrassingly frightful accounts of joy, delight and sheer horror within.

Bywater is one of the few sons to face up to the pitfalls of the whole endeavour. Men, he says, mine motherhood as the fount and origin of life and its troubles. His essay struggles to correct the balance,

unlike the nasty little cameo by Jon Snow, who seems to have preferred his nanny. His notorious revelation that his mother wore a wig is little to be ashamed of, in the context of his other remarks.

The mother-contributors, on the other hand, write with careful rapture and a vivid awareness that their sons could hold it all against them if there is any suggestion of complaint. They can't help it. As Kate Saunders explains: "Anyone who doubts the effects of having a male child on the mother's lobes has only to look at Mrs T. Her one vulnerable place is her boy. When the idiot Mark got lost in the desert we were treated to the sight of our First Citizen as a weeping old Mum".

This book contains some good, brisk writing – by Saunders and Bywater and also by Adam Mars-Jones and Jan Dal-

ley; it offers some bizarrely fascinating experiences recounted by Michael Seed and Phineas Foster, and some excruciating poetry by Spike Milligan and Jill Dawson. There is also a fair amount of self-indulgent claptrap. "It has been incredibly worthwhile", Ms Glendinning enthuses. For her, maybe.

Infinitely better value, in every sense, is Louise Guinness's anthology of fathers.

This is a glorious book, every page offering new delights. It ranges in time from Homer to Heaney, in expression from doting rapture to murderous fury, in scope from Rabelais to Peter Rabbit, in emotion from ecstasy to howling grief – and a good deal of it is very funny. Take Angela Carter, remembering her father coming into a room announcing "Enter the fairy singing and dancing and waving

her wooden leg". Take Maurice Baring's version of Goneril's letter to Regan complaining about their old Dad, who insists on tiresomely quoting Cordelia: "and you well remember, darling, that when Cordelia was here Paper could not endure the sight of her". Or take Piero de' Medici wheedling a present out of his heroic sire Lorenzo: "Magnificent Father mine, that pony does not come."

Traditionally, reviewers of anthologies hunt out those entries we think should be there and grumble if they are not. I looked for one that I thought only I had discovered: the section of his diary that lovingly records the astonishing intellectual achievements of John Evelyn's little son, who had just died. It's there. I stopped searching for lacunae and simply revelled. The book is divided loosely into 11 sec-

tions, and some parents crop up in several. Thackeray boasts about his little fat Annie and, later, Annie returns the compliment. Hazlitt appears both as precocious son and anxious father. Darwin is a particular favourite, at first making detailed notes on his baby's progress, observing the first evidence of reflexes and emotions – and then finding, as Guinness remarks, that his scientific brain is fractionally disabled by helpless tenderness. When, in a later chapter, we discover that the child has died, we appreciate that the Darwins "have lost the joy of the household and the solace of our old age".

One of the most pleasing aspects of the book is this new light that it sheds on men who are famous for achievements other than fatherhood. There is Cato making sure he is with his children at bath-time;

Henry Miller walking six miles to a hot spring to wash his babies' nappies; Roosevelt having trouble with his daughter ("I can be President of the United States or I can control Alice. I cannot possibly do both."); Kipling despairingly searching for comfort after his only son was killed in the trenches; William Temple noting glumly in his diary: "Holidays too long."

Louise Guinness's own father died when she was 12. In her introduction she writes movingly of her memories of him. A gentle, scholarly, humorous man, he was the only Oxford undergraduate boy to have taken ballet lessons and played rugby for his college. She finds it impossible even to imagine any faults in him, and she has never stopped missing him. She could scarcely have paid him a handsomer tribute than this book.

## Block in

Michael Arditti  
Shakespeare's  
Wise Shakespear by Ann

T he Merchant of Venice Shakespeare never intruded into the 1983 Gregory Doran's Solo lock not as "the most important but "the most intransigent" can a muffled line have proved remarks "we've been together".

In 1983, Sheri and Doran group that visited South Africa in the emerging democracy such as their statesman Sheri to a single invitation to Sheri to a great success and particularly country for England at the Market Theatre, Johannesburg. Of *Much Ado* inspired the following year with a Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* who would have problems for the audience and at one remove, it proves that Sheri's previous theatrical focus on the familiar than is barely known. There have been the century: Peter Brook's and Brian Cox's reader's prior knowledge in interpretation.

Judging

Donald Camer

Nuremberg, The Last Battle

David Irving has become a instigation, a by-word ganda in favour of Hitler refers to those who compare Hitler to. He has spoken of Hitler challenged historians to demonstrate that Hitler knew of, or the elimination of European Jews circulated the work of that Hitler's self-styled "experts" who have physical evidence of the extent in the German-speaking present his support and spoken

The do

John Campbell

Enoch Powell: A Biography

In a parliamentary career Powell served in government for years and in the Cabinet for a period of about six years. "rivers of blood" speech those words) April more attention, analysis, adult than any figure in British politics and Margaret Thatcher. He is credited with making Minister and then unmaking anticipating the central elements – liberal economics combine – at least a decade before stumbled on them. He has a project of more biographies writers, from Andrew Roth and flush of his notoriety to a fitting celebration in 1989. So the reader may wonder why especially as Robert Shepherd's gift of Powell's own papers.

The answer is precisely that is now the stuff of history; it is Under the 30 year rule to 1964 are open. Year by year the rule allows the previous rock pools of living memory explored. Thus the whole of Powell's career is now exposed the Treasury under Peter Thorne in their mitigation in their regeneration. The spending later seen by the as the seminal moment in the career, but also his considerable influence (1961-2) as the most Health between Aneurin Bevan and Clarke. Sheepe never held office to serve as Alec Douglas-Home's Office. Powell (exactly, perhaps, in trying to neutralise him).

Second, Shepherd has his archive, up to 1964, ceased to be a member, the *Shadow Cabinet* minutes chart his growing alienation from the wider range of issues than in explosive moment of his life, his exile in the winter shore he dwelt in a thickening in Ireland) for the rest of his hard material for the middle now available, Shepherd, w

# Blood and guts in Johannesburg

Michael Arditti reports on mayhem on and off stage as Shakespeare's shocker plays in South Africa

*Woza Shakespeare!* by Antony Sher and Gregory Doran, Methuen, £16.99

**T**he Merchant of Venice was not one of Freud's favourite Shakespeares, nevertheless he would have surely been intrigued by the 1987 Stratford performance in which Gregory Doran's Solanio described Antony Sher's Shylock not as "the most impenetrable cur that ever kept with men" but "the most impenetrable cur that ever slept with men". Rarely can a fluffed line have proved so prophetic for, as Doran wryly remarks, "we've been together ever since".

In 1994, Sher and Doran were part of a National Theatre group that visited South Africa to hold workshops and discussions in the emerging democracy. In spite of incidental irritants, such as their status as an "out couple" being disregarded in the single invitation to Sher to meet Prince Edward, the trip was a great success and particularly poignant for Sher, who left the country for England at the age of 19. They arranged with the Market Theatre, Johannesburg, whose legendary production of *Woza Albert* inspired the title of this memoir, to return the following year with a Shakespeare play.

Their choice of *Titus Andronicus* posed problems for the management, who would have preferred *Macbeth*. It posed problems for the audience and played to 25 per cent houses. And, at one remove, it poses problems for the reader: for, unlike Sher's previous theatrical journal, *The Year of the King*, which focused on the familiar figure of Richard III, *Titus Andronicus* is barely known. There have been only two major productions this century: Peter Brook's with Laurence Olivier and Deborah Warner's with Brian Cox. So the authors cannot rely on the reader's prior knowledge to sustain interest in the minutiae of interpretation.

They compensate by concentrating on the events surrounding the production. Doran as director chose *Titus* not simply because it offered a whopping part for Sher as star but for its relevance to the climate of violence in contemporary South Africa (a photographer on the original National Theatre visit witnessed a casual murder close to his hotel). As they come up against financial chicanery, administrative inefficiency and public hostility, the mood shifts from Shakespearean tragedy to the comedy of Evelyn Waugh and William Boyd.

The cast's enthusiasm can be excessive. The actress playing Lavinia (Titus's daughter) decides, after lengthy research that her reaction to an off-stage rape would be an on-stage miscarriage in a scene in which she does not officially appear. It is enough to make even the most radical Shakespearean pine for the Beryl Reid "let's start with the right shoes" approach. The description of the technical rehearsals belongs as much to military history as theatrical record, with faulty lines of communication (essential props not found, the Lighting Designer (bush-warfare (singing in the press), feigned attacks and tactical explosions (from the director) and the final push to victory.

The modern-dress production attracted great controversy in South Africa, above all on account of its accents. One sympathises with Sher's mother who wanted to show off her son, the English Shakespearean, only to find him playing an Afrikaner; one sympathises somewhat less with the letter-writer who "could not abide the excruciating experience of the ugly accents of Southern Africa abusing some of the most beautiful language ever written"; one sympathises not at all with the critic who,



A whopping part for Renaissance man: Antony Sher and Jennifer Woodburne in *Titus Andronicus*

STUART MORRIS

objecting to Sello Maake ka Ncube as an unusually complex Aaron, declared that he would prefer to see a white actor blacked up.

The narrative is shared between the two writers in alternate diary entries, a technique similar to the exchange of letters in Sher's novel, *Cheap Lives*. And yet this fails to create as effective a contrast as might have been hoped. Apart from their different perspectives in rehearsal, both their viewpoints and voices are remarkably similar. Even after those passages in which professional tension gives way to domestic violence – Doran describes the "conversation with the flying plates" in a way that would be anathema to Michael Denison and Dulcie Gray –

peace is re-established at the expense of literary tension.

But then, although the book has two authors, it has one real subject: Sher. He is the senior partner, the Renaissance man both on and off stage, whose drawings add a further dimension to the story. Doran's return to his home county, Yorkshire, is acknowledged when the production tours in England, but it is Sher's return to his home country that takes centre-stage. Indeed, the book is most effective as a documentary counterpart to the fictional explorations of South African identity in Sher's novels, spiced with a black humour worthy of Shakespeare's own, as when the mutilated Albie Sachs dryly remarks of the show: "It's not a play for amputees!"

## Judging the judges

Donald Cameron Watt convicts a maverick historian of meanness and myopia

*Nuremberg, The Last Battle* by David Irving, Focal Point, £25

**D**avid Irving has become, in part at his own instigation, a by-word for historical propaganda in favour of Hitler and his regime. He refers to those who conspired to kill Hitler as traitors. He has spoken of Hitler as his hero. He has challenged historians to come up with hard evidence that Hitler knew of, let alone ordered, the elimination of European Jewry. He has privately circulated the work of that curious collection of self-styled "experts" who have tried to deny the physical evidence of the extermination camps. And in the German-speaking parts of Europe he has lent his support and spoken publicly at rallies of

those normally referred to as neo-Nazis. Hence Irving has become the target of a widespread and successful campaign to shut the doors of established British and American publishing houses against him. Focal Point, the publishers of this latest book, is David Irving himself, and operates out of his own house.

Yet alongside Irving the propaganda exists Irving, the indefatigable researcher, a man who has in the past been generous in sharing his enormous knowledge of the Nazi records with other scholars who do not share his idiosyncratic (to be polite) views. Some of his books have been major con-

tributions to knowledge. Although disagreeing with him profoundly on the nature of the Nazi regime, I have observed the failure of most of those who tried to challenge him to match his encyclopaedic knowledge and admired his capacity to come up with new and original material.

But this is not one of Irving's better books. It is marked with a meanness of spirit in his unwillingness to acknowledge the detailed work on the trial of the surviving Nazi leadership at Nuremberg in 1946 by the US historian Bradley Smith or by John and Ann Tusa from Britain. As with his book on Hitler's foreign policy before 1939, Irving

is masterly of the German sources is matched by his complete lack of any frame of reference for the policies which underlay the decision to stage a large public trial of the Nazi leadership.

In his effort to discredit prosecutors and judges, Irving misses the ironies in the Americans' advancement of the notion of conspiracy – an Anglo-Saxon doctrine that offers the sole exception to the assumption of innocence until guilt is proven. If a conspiracy is proven, then the accused have to prove they were not part of it. This shocked both the French and the Soviet jurists.

There can be no doubt that there had to be a

trial. There can be little doubt that the hands of the countries judging were less than fly-white. There can be no doubt that the verdict had been largely arrived at before the evidence was assembled. Yet with the exception of the Nazi anti-Semitic pornographer, Streicher, a man so unpleasant of character that the other defendants shunned him, the sentences passed were richly deserved. Above all, the evidence destroyed any possibility of a war-guilt controversy like that which followed the first world war. Democracy in Germany was reborn, free of the guilt of surrender. It proved to be a much stronger plant than anyone expected.

## The doom of the prophet

John Campbell follows a lost leader into self-inflicted exile

*Enoch Powell: A Biography* by Robert Shepherd, Hutchinson, £25

**I**n a parliamentary career of 37 years, Enoch Powell served in government for just over four years and in the Cabinet for only 15 months. Yet for a period of about six years following his notorious "rivers of blood" speech (not that he ever used those words) in April 1968, he commanded more attention, analysis, adulation and excoriation than any figure in British politics between Churchill and Margaret Thatcher.

He is credited with making Ted Heath Prime Minister and then unmaking him again; and with anticipating the central elements of Thatcherism – liberal economics combined with English nationalism – at least a decade before the Lady herself stumbled on them. He has already been the subject of more biographies than most Prime Ministers, from Andrew Roth and Paul Foot in the first flush of his notoriety to Patrick Congreve's admiring celebration in 1989. So as we slip into history the reader may wonder why we need another; especially as Robert Shepherd does not have the benefit of Powell's own papers. This is not the official life.

The answer is precisely that the bulk of his career is now the stuff of history, as opposed to journalism. Under the 30 year rule the Cabinet papers up to 1964 are open. Year by year, like a receding tide, the rule allows the previously hidden crevices and rock pools of living memory to be systematically explored. Thus the whole of Powell's brief ministerial career is now exposed: not only his year at the Treasury under Peter Thorneycroft, 1957-8, culminating in their resignation on the issue of public spending, later seen by Thatcherite mythology as the seminal moment in the rediscovery of monetarism; but also his considerably more important stint (1960-3) as the most creative Minister of Health between Aneurin Bevan and Kenneth Clarke. Since he never held office again after refusing to serve Sir Alec Douglas-Home, the Public Record Office has nothing more to reveal about Powell (except, perhaps, how later governments tried to neutralise him).

Second, Shepherd has had access to the Conservative Party archive up to 1975 (when Powell ceased to be a member), including most crucially the Shadow Cabinet minutes from 1964-70. These chart his growing alienation from Heath on a much wider range of issues than immigration until the explosive moment of his Birmingham speech and his exile to the wilder shores of populism, where he dwelled in a thickening miasma of conspiracy theories (compounded by further exile to Northern Ireland) for the rest of his career. With all this hard material for the middle years of Powell's life now available, Shepherd, as a serious historian,

quite rightly concentrates on what he can document: the "River Tiber" speech comes three quarters of the way through the book.

Sherpherd is steeped in this material, having covered much of the same ground only two years ago in his equally good biography of Powell's friend and rival, Iain Macleod. The problem that any biographer has with Powell, however, is getting into his mind. Powell is not an ordinary politician but (almost uniquely in high-level politics) a true intellectual. There are plenty of highly educated people, but that is different: Powell is an intellectual in that he is genuinely fascinated (and led astray) by ideas. No biographer will really crack Enoch Powell who cannot follow him into the three areas of detailed textual scholarship which have excited his intellectual passion over his 34 years.

First, from his schooldays onwards he edited and translated Herodotus, becoming Professor of Greek at 24; years later Lord Hailsham, who prided himself on his knowledge of the classics, found that Powell could always cap him. Second, Powell fell in love at the age of 15 with the German language and German romanticism: Goethe, Heine and above all Nietzsche. Hitler disillusioned him equally abruptly, but 50 years later his eight records on *Desert Island Discs* were all German (four of them Wagner).

Third, he is obsessed with minute analysis and interpretation of the New Testament, an obsession which Shepherd reveals he inherited from his mother (who taught herself Greek in order to clear up some theological point) and which culminated only two years ago in the publication of his bizarre theory that Jesus was not crucified but stoned to death. He has also taught himself medieval Welsh, written a history of the medieval House of Lords and produced three volumes of poems. All this Shepherd duly recounts, but he cannot be said to make biographical sense of it. Maybe Simon Heffer (the next biographer in line) will crack it, but more likely the task is impossible.

The great paradox of Powell, a man who lives for paradox, is that his famously logical intellect is actually the slave of his emotions. He suffers Pauline conversions with the regularity of Mr Toad. Every few years his whole belief system is turned upside down by a new passion which entirely overthrows the old. Horrified by the Roehm purge, he renounced his love of Germany overnight. Abandoning the idea of a musical career, he went to the opposite extreme and abjured music altogether. Militantly atheist as a boy, he dramatically rediscovered Christianity (or his own highly individual interpretation of it) on Easter Sunday, 1950.

He fell in love with India during the war and went into politics to save the British Empire. As late as 1954 he was still asserting that Britain without the Empire was nothing, only to reverse that faith too and turn all his powers of local demolition on ridiculing his party's imperial delusions. In each case it was not simply that he changed his mind, but that he changed it so dramatically, so vehemently, so emotionally.

His subsequent brilliantly argued, but invariably negative crusades – against coloured immigration, European integration, nuclear deterrence, the American alliance and any hint of compromise in Northern Ireland – all stemmed from his traumatic rejection of empire and the adoption in its place of an impossibly idealised notion of English national identity. On every item of this bizarrely disparate checklist Powell had a case.

It was quite right that politicians should face up to the unanticipated social transformation wrought by immigration; and Heath was not cando about the federalist implications of the Treaty of Rome (neither was Thatcher about the Single European Act). But in every instance Powell's credibility was damaged, first by his having previously argued the opposite with equal passion and then by his self-indulgent taste for blood-curdling overstatement. While constantly invoking a mystical Englishness, he has the very un-English temperament of a religious fanatic. He overlooks the true British genius for illogicality, compromise and muddling through.

He was most consistent, most prophetic and perhaps most influential on economics. Certainly much of what he was mocked for advocating in the 1960s – free markets, privatisation, limited government – became reality in the 1980s (not only in Britain, but around the world). But even here he did not practice his own principles. As Minister of Health, he not only planned the most ambitious hospital programme in the history of the NHS, but enforced Selwyn Lloyd's incomes policy against the nurses with a ferocious rigidity which appalled his colleagues.

History will remember Enoch as an ascetic half-mad hermit forever prophesying national doom at the hands of Pakistanis, Americans, Eurocrats and Irish (abetted by the treacherous Foreign Office).

He deserves some credit as a guru of market economics, John the Baptist to Keith Joseph and Margaret Thatcher. But he destroyed most of that credit by his loony extremism on other subjects. Robert Shepherd has written a first class account of an extraordinary career. But, when the dazzling detonations of Powell's pyrotechnics have faded, all that remains is a whiff of sulphur.

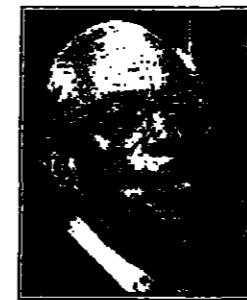
### In next week's books pages

Books of the Year from Malcolm Bradbury, Barbara Cartland, Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, Roy Foster, Penelope Fitzgerald, Ian Morris, Ned Sherrin, D J Taylor, and Barbara Trapido. Plus Charles Nicholl on Malcolm Lowry's Letters, Robin Cook on the Literary Companion to Parliament and John Campbell on Henrik Ibsen.



Festive spirits: a 12-page guide to seasonal recipes flavoured with alcohol from Britain's top chefs. Plus, Richard Ehrlich and panel test 25 bottles of bubbly and choose their five favourites

A friend of Margaret Thatcher, Rupert Murdoch and the Queen Mum, how far does Lord Wyatt of Weeford's influence stretch? Or is he just good at parties? Geraldine Bedell finds out



Michael Flatley and 'Riverdance' turned Irish dancing into a global industry. Then everything turned sour. Both sides of the Riverdance row tell their story for the first time to Matthew Sweet

IN THIS WEEKEND'S INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY



# travel & outdoors

## Reasons to be cheerful in Antigua – part 365

• Simon Calder counts the blessings beyond the island's shimmering beaches

Next time you read that a place possesses 365 "somethings" to waltz in with the breezy prose, York, I have been assured, has 365 pubs; and precisely 365 river irrigate the island of Dominica.

The implication is simple: that so numerous is the resource, you could visit a different one every day for a year (and, in leap years, still have 24 hours left over). My reservations are twofold. First, I never read of a destination bestowed with 364 or 367 of a particular asset, and suggest that a certain amount of rounding goes on. Second, the fact that an item occurs with the frequency of the number of days in the year is not automatically a Good Thing. Indeed, I have no wish ever to set foot again in some pub in York. So learning that Antigua has 365 beaches provoked a degree of cynicism, particularly since sources disagree about whether or not the total is reached with the help of the island's smaller sibling, Barbuda.

I could have set out to count every single arc of shimmering silver. But this week the weather in the Caribbean has been so glorious (highs in the mid-80s, lows just 10 degrees less), that instead I accepted the notion that there are plenty of them – and went off to enumerate Antigua's other blessings.

Every country, however modest, needs a capital. St John's is a cheerfully dilapidated sort of place, spruced up just enough to look passable for the cruise-ship visitors – a quarter-million last year. A more alluring statistic, though, is tucked just inside the door of the island's museum. Pride of place is given to the bat that Viv Richards used for his record-breaking century of 56 deliveries in a test match in 1986. Alongside it – and looking sorry for itself – is the cricket ball that took the punishment, so bruised as to resemble an over-ripe passion-fruit.

Besides emphasising the long-term cricketing superiority of the West Indies, the museum makes the British visitor smile, and frown. The good cheer is thanks to the refreshingly straightforward nature of the stout old court house that has been converted into a place of learning about the island. The story of Antigua from the turmoil of its volcanic origins to that tempestuous Viv Richards innings is traced out in a series of

approachable exhibits. You could scoot around in 10 breezy minutes – or stay all morning to soak up the whole sad story.

That is where the frown comes in. The dreadful crimes perpetrated by the Europeans against the original inhabitants, and later against the slaves imported from Africa, hit particularly hard in Antigua. The roots of Eastern Caribbean independence arose as a reaction to especially harsh treatment on the island's plantations. The planters, and the sugar, have long dissolved against a background of unfavourable trade. Today, the bitterness of upmarket tourism is the source of the island's energy. Colonialism can take many forms.

You emerge from the museum, blinking, into the high Caribbean noon, a little wiser and a lot more humble. Anyone without a skin thick as sugar cane will immediately feel anxious about the reaction of local people to outsiders. Which makes the reality – that Antiguans are open, generous and welcoming hosts – all the more gratifying. The ties with Britain are sturdy, too. I hitched a ride with Charles, who was born on the island but had spent 33 years of his working life in Tottenham – as long as he could last without tasting the soothing, salty air that dances through the streets of St John's.

He told me the hurricane season this year passed without serious damage in Antigua, a relief after the assault by Hurricane Luis in 1995. From some of the reports at the time, you might have concluded that the island had been blown so far off course that it was currently lost in the Bermuda Triangle. But the damage was rapidly repaired in time for the main tourist season. Bermuda shorts are back in town.

So are the "retail opportunities" that multiply around any Caribbean port. Avoid Little Switzerland (a watch shop, not a series of Alp-like humps) and the King's Casino, in favour of ambushing past the outsized Anglican cathedral that disproportionately dominates St John's. Keep going until you see the following message:

"Go to school. Study hard. Try to become a hero."

These stern words adorn a hoarding above the gentle frenzy of commerce that comprises the town market. Trade takes the form of heroic, staccato yells. They slice cleanly through the rumble of diesel

(the site doubles as a bus station) and the thud of bass guitar riffs that boom out of passing cars – 1.8-litre ghetto-blasters.

Centre stage in this throng are the fruits coaxed patiently from the land. Antigua is smaller than the Isle of Wight, yet from some viewpoints the countryside goes on for ever. Forget that you are never more than seven miles from one of those 365 beaches and plough across the heart of the island to touch the real texture of Antigua.

First, choose your weapon. This must feel as it takes buyers around the showroom. The people of Antigua are unfailingly polite – until they get behind the wheel of a vehicle. I had originally been told the 40mph signs as signifying a maximum speed, but many drivers appear to regard this as either a bare minimum or an outright challenge.

The excitement goes up a notch as soon as there is some obstruction, when the drive-on-the-left rule is suspended. Skoda pick-ups (I promise you there is such a vehicle) clash with smoked-glass Japanese minibuses that barrel around the island, and any bystander unwise enough to be walking along the road must be prepared to jump into a ditch at a moment's notice.

You will probably think me foolish to confess that last Tuesday I rented a bicycle to take my two-wheeled place in this mobile circus. Indeed, in 40 miles of cycling I was forced off the road three times. But, if you remember, last Tuesday in Britain the blizzards were beginning to bite. In Antigua, my only complaint about the weather was that the sun was perhaps impossibly shiny and the sky a shade too improbably blue.

A bike bestows the freedom to take Antigua at its own pace. You get heckled plenty, in the cheeriest of manners, from villagers who think the sight of a honky on a bike is a hoot – or at least a change from the Jeep-swerving tourists.

I unwound through the island, past prairie landscapes speckled with cattle and framed by scraggy escarpments and that sharp ultramarine sky. A long-overturn car quietly rusted into this wilderness, as plants flexed their tentacles around the rotting steel hulk. The whole scene demanded a healthy warning at the foot of the foreground – because it looked as if the Marlboro Man was expected to trot along at any moment.

He didn't show. But if he had, the two women toasting corn cobs against the pastel-yellow backdrop of their none-up, two-down timber home would have been ready with elevenses. Antigua is one long snack-opportunity corn here, coconut there, an occasional curried goat served in unenvying proximity to the live, unspiced version. My favourite roadside stop was the Your Home Town Luncheonette. If only it were.

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equivalent of a Farrah. I pedalled on.

From tip to toe of this concise island takes 90 minutes. You know you are nearing the end when the scattering of trees on the horizon is augmented by the geometric precision of yacht masts.

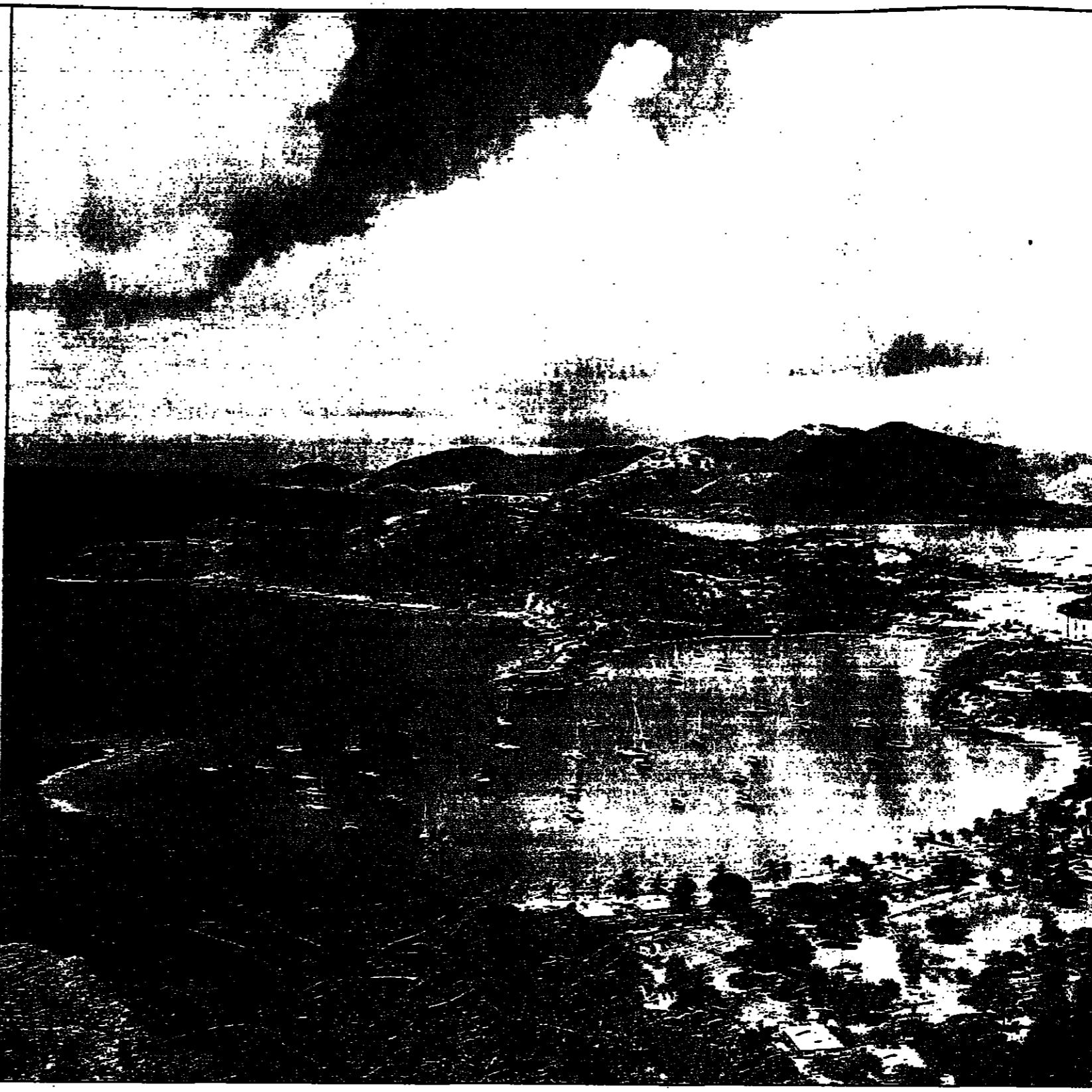
English Harbour is still an accurate name for the ample bay that subdues Caribbean storms, and provides shelter for around 100 yachts. Within the sanctum of Nelson's Dockyard, you hear plenty of British voices among the boat-owners, supplemented by American and Australian accents. But you notice more the bold Georgian architecture that turns the ensemble into a most characterful marina.

Two centuries ago, Antigua had a parallel role to its position today: hub for the Caribbean. Nowadays aircraft home in on the island; but as the 18th century gave way to the 19th, this was the base for the British navy in the region.

Horatio Nelson was a frequent visitor, though on one occasion he became so ill before departure for Britain, he ordered a cask of rum to be placed on board to preserve his body should he die. An exhibition of naval paraphernalia includes old dockyard furniture scarred by ancient graffiti, and Nelson's telescope.

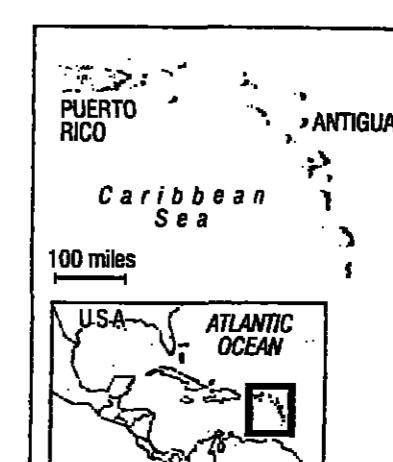
You can turn a blind eye to tourism by scrambling along to the end of the peninsula, across rocks strewn with pregnant-looking Turk's head cacti. The lazy arm of the sea wall flicks out into the Caribbean, while the shoulder merges with a gaunt cliff. The skewed strata of rich red rocks takes a pounding from the sea, and melts into a series of jagged crescents. I thought: I hope they're not regarded as beaches. And then I counted my blessings.

Battle with the shrubbery – taming the front garden....12  
Wyoming to New Zealand, on skis....17



Half nelson: The view over English Harbour from Shirley Heights (named after a former governor). In the 18th century Horatio Nelson was a frequent visitor to the British naval base here. And in the Nelson's Dockyard museum the Admiral's telescope can be seen proudly on display.

PHOTOGRAPH: ROBERT HARDING



Features Options Find

**Primrose Hill**  
girl sees  
Great  
effort

On call: this month, Antigua acquires a new dialling code. The old 001 809 country code is replaced by 001 268. This should be followed by the seven-digit number. Antigua is four hours behind the UK (noon in London is 8am in St John's).

Getting there: British Airways and BWIA operate non-stop flights from Gatwick and Heathrow respectively. Official fares cost around £920 return; cheaper tickets are widely available for around £500 return through discount agents such as the Caribbean Reunion Club (0171-344 0101). Some long-stay specials for as little as £249 for seats in charter flights. Prices rise sharply over Christmas.

Getting in: British citizens need only a valid passport to be admitted for short visits.

Getting out: departure tax of EC\$30 (£7) is payable at the airport.

Package holidays: numerous tour operators, including Thomson, Kumi and British Airways Holidays, offer inclusive packages in Antigua, using either scheduled

Microsoft Encarta 97 World Atlas.

Features Options Find

**Antigua survival guide**

On call: this month, Antigua acquires a new dialling code. The old 001 809 country code is replaced by 001 268. This should be followed by the seven-digit number. Antigua is four hours behind the UK (noon in London is 8am in St John's).

Getting around: bus services are frequent on most routes, though some are slow. Simon Calder rented a mountain bike from Cycle Krazy in St John's (0463 9253) for £9 a day. The best, though dated, map is published by Ordnance Survey at £6.

Staying healthy: besides the risk of road accidents, the most significant threat is from the intense sun in the middle of the day.

Cashing up: the currency in Antigua is the Eastern Caribbean dollar (ECS), shared with seven other nearby nations. The bank rate this week was £1 = ECS4.30 and US\$1 = ECS2.75. The US dollar is readily acceptable everywhere – but at a disadvantageous rate compared with what you can get at a bank.

Seeing sights: the Museum of Antigua in St John's opens daily except Sunday; a donation of EC\$5 is requested. Nelson's Dockyard is open daily, admission EC\$6.50.

Most see: the big event is Sailing Week, 27 April-3 May.

Further information: Antigua High Commission, 15 Thayer Street, London W1M 5LD (0171-486 7073).

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**Pygmy population discovered in grandmother's**

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# Giving thanks for American prosperity

Thursday brings Thanksgiving, the start of serious shopping – and the American way to take the heat off Christmas. By Matthew Hoffman

**T**hanksgiving is a true original, a holiday invented by the Americans and dedicated to celebrating the country's founding purpose: plenitude. Yes, some immigrants travelled to those shores in search of religious or political freedom; but as every observer of American society for the past two centuries has noted, material success is the country's true god – damned by elites as "consumerism", enjoyed by everyone else as "prosperity". The citizens of the United States know they have much to be grateful for. And once a year they gather around their tables to acknowledge that gratitude – which they accomplish by overeating.

The First Thanksgiving – in 1621 – set the pattern. In one sense it was a traditional harvest festival, only the Pilgrims of Plymouth, Massachusetts were celebrating the success of their first harvest. They were Puritans from East Anglia and Lincolnshire, who had sailed from Plymouth in the *Mayflower* the year before. When I was a school child in Pennsylvania, it was explained to me that the Pilgrims had survived their first harsh New England winter through the assistance of the local Indians and, in gratitude, they invited them to participate in their first feast. Now I am pleased to learn, from a posting on the Internet, that Edward Winslow, a leader of the Plymouth colony, mentioned the Indians in his account of the 1621 jamboree:

"Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a special manner rejoice together after we had gathered the fruit of our labours. They four in one day killed as much fowl as, with a little help beside, served the company almost a week ... Many of the Indians coming amongst us, and among the rest their greatest King Massasoit, with some 90 men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five deer, which they brought to the plantation and bestowed on our governor, and upon the captain and others."

What has elevated the festivities from a religious harvest festival for the God-fearing to a national event is the growth of the US from an agrarian to an industrial – and now post-industrial – society. In the process the holiday has taken on the customary forms of a secular country – where Christmas is about shopping, and Easter is about a

parade. In fact, for many Americans, the most significant fact about Thanksgiving is that the date it is celebrated (the fourth Thursday in November) marks the beginning of Christmas shopping and this, in turn, is signalled by a Thanksgiving Day parade that is concluded with the delivery of Santa Claus to the largest department store in town.

Macy's annual Thanksgiving Day parade in New York is the most famous of these events, but it has its smaller counterparts throughout the country. Philadelphia claims to have the oldest Thanksgiving parade and even little nearby Pottstown, my home town, musters its school marching bands and drill teams and white-booted cheerleaders to glitter in the late autumn sunshine.

But the meal remains the main event: ritualised in its menu (turkey with cranberry sauce, candied sweet potatoes, and pumpkin pie are traditional, although the side dishes vary with ethnicity) and demanding in its attendance – the whole family, no matter how spread out across the country, is summoned to a common table. (Chinese restaurants in New York shut up shop this one day in the year, and their staff take the day off in the casinos of New Jersey.) There is a hidden blessing here that only an American like myself, who has lived through the English Christmas, with its suffocating triple role of family get-together, children's gift fest and religious holiday, might appreciate. For Americans, Thanksgiving takes the heat off Christmas. The extended family gathers (and has its annual tiffs and *longueurs*); no gifts are exchanged; and Christmas is left as a quiet time for parents and children to muddle through on their own.

The nicest fact about Thanksgiving is its limitations. The holiday resists commercialisation and other add-ons: no special cards, no new, elaborate ways of roasting a turkey, no making the holiday more special by taking an expensive trip. Andy Warhol once pointed out the democratic credentials of Coca-Cola. There's no way of getting a better one, he observed: a fancier version just isn't a Coke. The same is true of Thanksgiving. Get the family together and eat a big bird. That's it; that's all you can do. Otherwise it ain't Thanksgiving.

Welcome to America's democratic holiday.

Additional research by Alissa Quart in New York



Start spreading the news: Thanksgiving marks the start of the Christmas shopping season

PHOTOGRAPH: JON LEVY

**Getting there:** London-New York is the busiest international air route in the world. Between 5am and 7pm every day, at least 20 wide-bodied aircraft (plus a couple of Concorde) take off from London, destination Kennedy airport in New York City, or its New Jersey rival Newark. These flights are supplemented by regional departures from Birmingham, Manchester and Glasgow, and connections are available from a range of provincial airports connecting through Dublin, Amsterdam and Reykjavik. Before mid-December, you can expect to pay £200-300 for a return flight over a weekend, inclusive of taxes of around £25. To get the best prices, book through a discount agency rather than direct with the airline. The lowest fares are on airlines with less frequent services, such as Kuwait Airways, Air India and El Al.

**Getting around:** the subway system is fast,

## New York: the fast facts

**Airport links:** the cheapest and surest way from Kennedy into Manhattan is to take the free Port Authority bus to Howard Beach subway station. From here, a \$1.50 (90p) ride will take you to any station on the New York subway system. Total journey time from Kennedy airport to mid-town Manhattan is about 90 minutes.

From Newark airport in New Jersey, the most exotic alternative to the New Jersey transit bus to Manhattan, price \$7 (£4.50), is to take a taxi to Hoboken for around \$25 (£16) and cross on the ferry across the Hudson River.

cheap and complicated. Before attempting to use the system, pick up a map and some flat-fare tokens (\$1.50/90p) from a kiosk in a subway station. These tokens are also valid for Manhattan bus services, which mostly run north-south along the main avenues.

**Accommodation:** (All the New York telephone numbers quoted below should be prefixed 001 212 when dialling from the UK.) New York is easily the most expensive place to stay in the US. A room in a good, central hotel such as the Mayflower on Central Park West (265 0060) will cost at least \$160 (£95) a night for a double

room, and bookings before Christmas are heavy. An alternative is a place in a hostel. These are often restricted to foreign visitors only, apparently in a bid to deter local low-life. Single and double rooms are available at the centrally located Vanderbilt YMCA (224 East 47th Street, 756 9600) for £35/£45 respectively, while along at the Big Apple Hostel (119 W 45th Street, 302 2603) a double room costs £58 (£35) – but you have to take a chance on the day; it does not accept advance bookings.

**Packages:** some specialists such as Major Travel (0171-485 7017) sell tours that include

transatlantic flights and hotel accommodation, for around £449. The big airlines also sell packages through their tour operating subsidiaries – American Airlines Holidays (0181-577 9966), British Airways Holidays (01293 723100), United Vacations (0181-313 0999) and Virgin Holidays (01293 617181).

**Red tape:** British passport holders travelling on normal return air tickets to the United States do not require visas. A visa is useful, however, if you plan to visit America frequently – it cuts down on form-filling and reduces processing time at US Immigration. A visitor's visa, valid for up to 10 years, costs £13.75 from the Visa Section of the US Embassy. Call the premium-rate number 0891 200290 for further details.

## something to declare

### trouble spots

#### Reports from Latin America

**French Guiana:** Gangs of armed rioters fought police, looted stores and set them on fire for four nights – *Reuter*.

**Colombia:** About 200 Colombians have fled to Panama to escape violence in northwest Colombia – long the scene of bitter conflicts between rebels and right.

### bargain of the week

For the next week, a car and four passengers can travel from Liverpool to Belfast for a total of £99 each way on

### visitors' book

**Museum of Antigua, West Indies** (the book asks for suggestions for improvements, as well as comments)

Restore your landmarks and forts – *Vince Marrone, New York City*.

Happy and friendly – *Trevor Firman, London*.



wing paramilitary groups battling for control of contraband routes – *Reuter*.

**Honduras:** Widespread storms have caused the worst flooding in 42 years in parts of Central America, killing at least nine people and driving tens of thousands from their homes. Seven people have died in due to storms over the past nine days – *AP*.

**Norse Irish Ferries** (01232 779090) with a berth in a cabin, a four-course dinner and a full Irish breakfast.

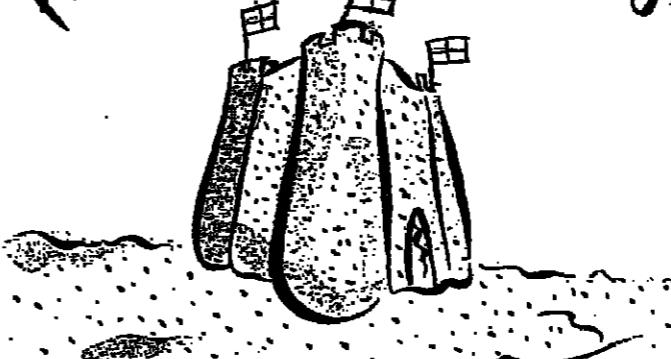
Thank you for preserving the past for all to see – *Germaine Cassell, Quebec*.

Particularly good for children – *Derek Bond, London*.

I went back to the past for a while – *Arif, Bangladesh*.

A cool cocktail would be nice – *Johanne Foster, Preston*.

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**Hem**  
Robert Rollas

**H**emingway crouched up on a hill, still lingers in the mind's eye. We crossed the top of a hill, forward on his, and then the driver had to honk and slow down to donkeys that were sleeping in the shade of a tree.

His words lingered alongside my vi

were the sleeping donkeys as we drove on the motorways but, equally, not much in

Andalucia is at half-way stage.

The movement away from living

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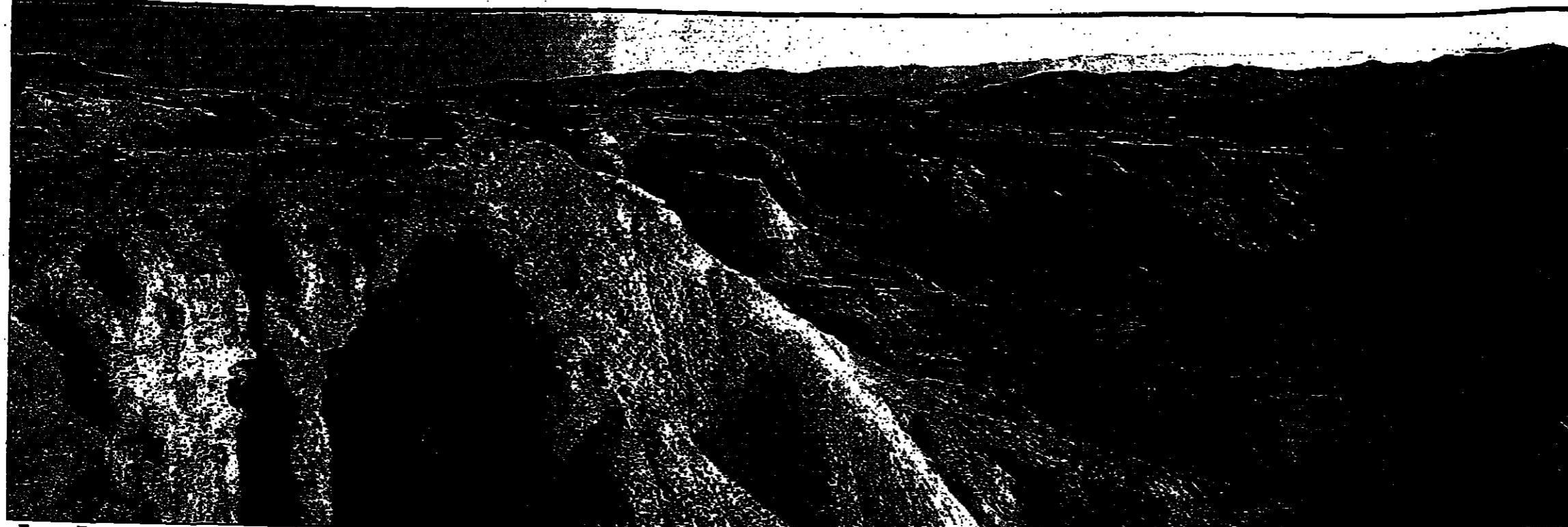
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The wild frontier: the desert arroyos, land formations at Tabernas, north of Almería – an area which was much used for filming Westerns

PHOTOGRAPH: ROBERT HARTING

## Hemingway would approve

Robert Rollason tours the wild country around Almería in southern Spain

**H**emingway conjured up an enduring image of Spain that still lingers in the mind's eye. "Climbing all the time we crossed the top of a col, the road winding back and forward on itself, and then it was really Spain ... the driver had to honk and slow down to avoid running into two donkeys that were sleeping in the road," he wrote in *The Sun Also Rises*.

His words lingered alongside my view of how it is now. There were no sleeping donkeys as we drove along the silk-smooth motorways but, equally, not much modern traffic either. Eastern Andalucía is at a half-way stage of development.

The movement away from living on the land by the Spanish of all classes in Andalucía has accelerated, so that even farmhouses and farm buildings are now oddly rare, although many have been converted into villas for foreign residents and holidaymakers.

Almería, the local capital, is a stately city, at least in its ancient centre. The Moors' fortress, the 10th-century Alcazaba, remains as a massive reminder of those warriors, builders and scholars whose centuries of occupation are still so apparent in these parts.

"Don't miss the bar," said a helpful Yorkshireman descending from the top as we puffed up the last 100 steps of the old fortress, which now defends only markets and an attendant café. This promise was a stimulus to progress, but no good. The dreaded Spanish hour of 2pm had arrived, and the bar was being locked up for the day. It was worth pressing on to the top, though. The views across the city and sea are spectacular, and the highest section of the fortress is a bulky Christian addition that contrasts with the Moorish style of the rest.

If anything, the cathedral at Almería looks more like a fortress

than the Alcazaba. The church replaced a mosque on the same site. It was destroyed by an earthquake in 1522 and sturdy rebuilt a couple of years later. As you walk through the doorway in its massive walls, the inside comes as a big surprise, with soaring columns rising to an almost Chartres-like Gothic ceiling.

The centre of Almería has a pleasing, metropolitan feel. The town has been significantly moved into the modern world by a recent filling-in of one of those depressing dry river beds so common in southern Spain. This ran right down the centre of the main boulevard, the Rambla de Belén.

On the way out of Almería the buildings are new and the townscape, to put it mildly, lacks neatness. The scrub becomes a desert 18 miles to the north, where the small town of Tabernas, the centre of Andalucía's famous Spaghetti Western country. Today, a village is curiously called Mini Hollywood, but the film-makers have long gone and only their Western

town sets remain as a kind of half-hearted theme park. Many small Spanish towns in the area are, of course, fantastic enough to be seen almost as wholehearted theme parks: the hanging village of Sorbas, built on a long high cliff, or, at the coast, Mojácar, where the buildings are stacked up into a huge, crazy pyramid.

Some towns here still have cave dwellers. Cuevas de Almanzora, 60 miles north of Almería city, is a case in point. The town also has its own well restored Moorish alcazaba, which houses an attractive art gallery. In spite of this prettification, Cuevas retains the feel of a traditional Spanish small community, with gypsy market traders still wearing black suits and wide-brimmed black Córdoba hats like the silhouetted man in the old Sandeman's poster.

Andalucía seems to prefer to keep one foot in the past in many ways. In this year's national election, it remained loyal

to a local boy, the former socialist prime minister Felipe González from Seville, at the moment when many regions switched allegiance to José María Aznar's conservative PP party. Expatriates are not allowed to vote in national elections, although they can in local elections after seven years' residence. In some communes one imagines there may be enough of them to affect the results. From any highish point in Cortijo Grande, an Eighties development near the small town of Turre, west of Mojácar, scores of villas can be seen dotted about, and all of them are occupied by expatriates, mostly British.

In Turc, Rickie of Rickie's Bar is not a Bogart lookalike but another English entrepreneur. In the mountaintop village of Sierra Cabrera the proprietor of the Pub Los Pastores is also English. From a distance, the village looks as old as time, but in fact every building has been put up since 1985. An Englishman wearing a Harlequins rugby shirt sat at the bar as we ate lunch. We might have been in Surrey, except for those amazing views outside of mountain, valley and the blue sea stretching away towards Cartagena.

The odd thing is that the mood of change seems to suit both the incoming Brits and the indigenous Spanish. The British like the countryside while the Spanish have always preferred to live in towns. Today Spanish property owners are rebuilding early-19th-century town houses in exact and exquisite detail.

Will this process of change keep going? Judging by the happy party of people who gathered at the home of our expat friend Douglas, the British love-affair with Spain is far from over. The only threat to it may be global warming. If the climate of Granada shifts up as far as Guildford, the Brits may return to their own part of the world – as the Moors did five centuries ago. And I think Papa Hemingway would approve of that.

### Almería essentials

**Getting there:** Scheduled flights to Almería from Heathrow, via Madrid, with Iberia (0171-830 0011) cost £225 including tax. Prices rise the nearer it gets to Christmas. Charter flights go direct to Almería: Monarch has a service on Sundays for £139 available through Spanish Travel Service (0171-387 5337) and Capital Flights (0171-209 4000) offers a fare of £89 on Britannia from Gatwick.

**Getting around:** Picking up a rental car at the airport is easiest. A week's rental for a group A car (the smallest vehicle available) costs £139 from Budget (0800 181 181), inclusive of unlimited mileage, collision damage waiver and tax. Cars are also available from Avis (0990 900 500), Hertz (0990 996 699) and Holiday Autos (0990 300 400).

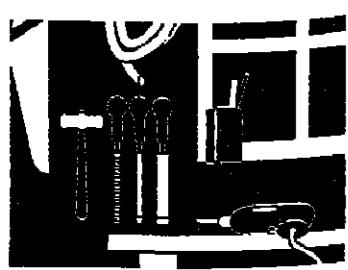
**Getting information:** Spanish Tourist Office, 57 St James's Street, London SW1A 1LD (0171-499 0901).

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<b>the challenge:</b> raise sponsorship in aid of Oxfam		<b>Simply Crete 1997 brochure</b> out now. Details from brochure. Mon-Fri & Bank-holiday locations our specialty		<b>Simply Crete 1997 brochure</b> out now. Details from brochure. Mon-Fri & Bank-holiday locations our specialty		<b>FRANCE</b> <b>French Affair</b> Quality villas and cottages in the most lovely areas of France. Mountains with s. pools and tennis courts, coastal properties, cottage villages, and all types of holiday property in France. City Breaks, Paris, Montrouge, Rennes, Brest, Nantes, Lorient, Vannes, St Malo, Dinard, St Brieuc, St Malo, St Malo, St Malo, St Malo, St Malo		<b>CHRISTMAS            IN SPAIN</b> 8 DAY COACH HOLIDAY TO THE SUNNY COSTA BRAVA <b>£179</b> DEPARTS 22nd DECEMBER			
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<b>the brochure: 01865 312456</b> Oxfam United Kingdom and Ireland is a member of Oxfam International Registered charity No 209181		<b>ICEAM</b> UNITED KINGDOM AND IRELAND		<b>ICEAM</b> UNITED KINGDOM AND IRELAND		<b>FRANCE</b> <b>French Affair</b> Quality villas and cottages in the most lovely areas of France. Mountains with s. pools and tennis courts, coastal properties, cottage villages, and					



## Toolshed

Tom Barber advises on equipment for hire

**S**ome pitiful souls are driven into paroxysms of longing by gadgets, and cannot resist a new purchase. For those with a more pragmatic outlook, hiring often makes more sense than buying, especially for expensive and infrequently used equipment.

I lack both time and energy for digging, so every year I hire a big beast of a rotavator to give my largest allotment a thorough going over. It has a powerful 8hp engine, and the job takes only about four hours. I then pass the machine on to a neighbour for the rest of the day and split the £50 hire cost. To buy the thing would set me back around £2,000, which at the current rate of usage, would pay my rental fees until I am 116.

The advantages are not limited to finance. Machinery that has sat around for months on end tends to sulk and refuse to start, metal bits get rusted up, and cutting blades are often left blunt. Hiring spares you from all that inevitable maintenance and repair. As with a rented car, hired tools live fast and die young. It is simply not worth a firm's time to fuss over geariatric gear, so most of the equipment is relatively new, and often more powerful and efficient than that normally available to the domestic market.

Home shredders, for example, are usually agonisingly slow. Far better to save up your debris for several months and then hire in a big, petrol shredder that will tear through the whole lot in next to no time. Hiring also avoids the headache of finding permanent storage space, and reduces the losses should you suffer a shed break-in.

The range of equipment available for hire is staggering: everything from a shovel to a JCB. If you are not familiar with your local outlets, it's worth having a look around before you embark on a major project or lash out big tool money. The most frequently requested garden item is probably a set of hedge cutters; then there are butch versions of familiar things such as mowers and strimmers, and more specialist items – paraffin weed burners, post hole borers, long-reach pruners. If you're planning a new look, help is at hand to take some of the tedious drudgery out of landscaping – concrete mixers, compactor plates for ramming down hard core, cutters for paving blocks. For something really ambitious, you could even get in a mini-excavator. Some of the equipment might prove a bit of a squeeze for the family car, but delivery can always be arranged.

Weekly hire is usually only double the day rate so it pays to set aside a block of time for each job rather than tackling things piecemeal. Fuel, cutting blades and so on are usually extra. Not unreasonably, all hire firms demand a sizeable deposit, and you are also liable to a cleaning charge if you return tools without having made any effort to clean them.

A few ground rules. Quality, cost and equipment range vary considerably so it's worth shopping around and looking at what is on offer before you part with any money. Never take something away before you are completely confident about how to operate it. If necessary get the shop to give a proper demonstration. Always make sure you have all the recommended safety equipment – gloves, goggles, ear defenders or whatever – and then use it. The most effortlessly lethal bit of garden equipment is undoubtedly a chainsaw, and I am pleased to see that many firms will now hire them out only if you take the appropriate safety gear with them and can guarantee that you are competent in their use.

Make sure that anything that you do hire is in good nick, with sharp blades, fitted safety guards, undamaged cables and so on. All equipment should have been thoroughly checked since it was last hired out – you life should not be threatened by the carelessness of the previous user. With all that taken care of, off you go.



Lesley Kant tackles the holly in her garden at The Old Vicarage in Carbrooke, Norfolk

PHOTOGRAPH BY LITTLEJOHN

David Walker's

From Arnside, walk along the wale

# And now for the shrubbery

**WORKSHOP:** The front garden is a muddle. How to sort it out? By Anna Pavord

**W**e have a garden of two acres which we have developed over the past 12 years. The two of us are the only gardeners so we tend to undertake a project a year. We have agreed that next year's project has to be the front of the house muddle. And here I am, bereft of ideas.

The front of the house faces east and gazes out, across a gravelled drive, to a sort of Victorian shrubbery – the remnants of, I suppose. The trees, as they mostly are, include a fine variegated holly tree, a slightly unconvincing English yew (it needs more space), laurel and box. There is also a weeping elm and a terminally ill hemlock.

All these are bordered on their east by a mixed hedge which screens a country road, and are undercarpeted by scraggly hypericum, some ivy, archangel and really robust marestail. My husband feels we should remove the laurel and hemlock and do some enthusiastic pruning and shaping. I am terrified of giving the marestail any more light: we haven't eradicated it anywhere else in the garden and have been forced into lateral semi-solutions. The border, though, is a formless muddle, but important, as it is the first glimpse any visitor gets of the garden. I don't want to begin wholesale destruction without a clearer idea of the outcome. Can you help, please?

**L**esley Kant and Steve Cunneen live in the kind of house that is the stuff of town-dwellers' dreams: an 1820s vicarage surrounded by its own land, on the edge of a Norfolk village. They did plenty of dreaming of their own before they bought it, 13 years ago. At that stage they were living in a terraced house in London, she working as a schools inspector, he as a project manager for Barclays. The London garden whetted their appetite for more, but when they bought the house, with its two acres, Steve said they "didn't know what an acre looked like. It was just something farmers talked about."

Not much had happened in the garden since the previous owners had bought the vicarage from the church, 12 years before Mr Cunneen and Ms Kant came on the scene. A job lot of conifers was dotted about (most now removed – hurrah!) and the beginnings of a herbaceous border laid out. But a phenomenal amount has happened in the last 12 years. Mr Cunneen and Ms Kant are the best kind of gardeners: observant, patient and perfectionist.

Since the remnant of the shrubbery described in Ms Kant's letter was one of the few mature features they inherited, they left it alone while they planted hedges, dug vegetable gardens, planted trees and trained topiary (and much more) in the rest of the garden. Now the shrubbery's time has come.

In her letter, Ms Kant calls it "important", as the first bit of the garden that visitors see. Yes, that is true, but it is not important in the sense that it needs to draw attention to itself. As you turn from the lane into the vicarage gate, the shrubbery is on your left, with a big

gravelled parking area in front of the house, which is on the right. So you are as likely as not to see the shrubbery sideways on. It will never be important as a special "feature" in the way.

The shrubbery's role is as a backdrop, which ought to remain sympathetic in style with the house it faces. And, most important, it must continue to shield the house from the east wind which is a killer.

You have to go through this general kind of preamble before you can get down to the particulars of a planting scheme. You should have a clear idea of what the plants need to do before you can start suggesting suitable candidates. And here, of course, the main players are already in place.

The planting sequence starts on the curve, as you turn into the drive, with the strange little weeping elm. It is dotty rather than beautiful (and not part of the original period planting), but curiously appropriate. After the elm, is the big yew at the back of the shrubbery.

The superb variegated holly is planted right in the foreground and reaches out over the gravel. It may originally have been clipped as a topiary specimen. That would make its position more understandable. Behind it is the dying hemlock, then English laurel in the background, with a spreading box tree in front. A fine, small weeping horse chestnut fills the back corner. The shrubbery is about 15ft wide and 30 yards long.

Before putting in any new plants, they obviously needed to assess the existing plants and decide what they were going to do. "Well, the hemlock will have to go," I said unfriendly. Two of its three enormous uprights had already died, and only wisps of life remained in the

third. It was "going back", as the kind, euphemistic phrase has it. But Ms Kant couldn't bear to cut it down while there was still a whisper of life in it. So it will stay, and act as a clothes-horse for a climbing *Vitis coignetiae*.

That cuts down the space for putting in new plants, but it doesn't matter. I have exactly the same feelings about a ridiculously sick lilac in my garden – one of the few remnants of the original planting there.

The laurels could be substantially reduced, without affecting their usefulness as windbreaks. I suggested that Ms Kant took out at ground level several of the large branches that were growing forward, which would release space for some contrasting shrubs. The yew had a couple of seedling elders interfering with it which needed to come out. It would look better, too, I thought, if the ivy were stripped from the bark, which glows a delicious rich, oxblood colour in wet weather.

Towards the back of the shrubbery there was room for a couple of quiet shrubs which would not mind deep shade and which would add interest to the mix, while fitting in with the predominantly 19th-century ambience of the planting. I suggested *Decaisneia fargesii*, with wonderful long pinnate leaves. It can be stooled down to keep it at whatever size you want – a useful trait in this kind of situation. And – because Ms Kant likes hydrangeas and hasn't got any – *H. sargentiana*, which has huge paddle leaves with the texture of sharkskin.

For the foreground, the handsome mahonia 'Charity' and either another pale-flowered lacecap hydrangea such as 'White Wave', or a flat-topped viburnum such as *V. plicatum* 'Lanarth'. All the

shrubs would need to go into big holes, well packed around with good compost and bonemeal. And mulched annually. This is a hungry, thirsty billet for them. But, properly looked after, they will cope. And these two gardeners certainly know how to look after plants.

The least successful section of the shrubbery is the first bit, on the curve by the weeping elm. Ms Kant had tried grassing it, so that by mowing, they might see off the marestail. But the marestail still flourishes, the grass doesn't grow because of the shade, and it looks inappropriate. The rest of the shrubbery is carpeted with ivy.

I suggested they did away with the grass, and tried lenten helichores, putting them in as big plants. Not the posh kinds. Tough, cheap ones that will flower before the marestail gets its head above the ground. In between, ferns such as hartstongue, and the marble-leaved *Arum italicum* 'Pictum'. The circle inside the cage of weeping branches from the elm could be filled with autumn-flowering cyclamen.

As for the rest of the underplanting, I would get rid of the hypericum and encourage the ivy, by sifting some compost over it during the winter. This will please the marestail, too, but that can't be helped. Mr Cunneen and Ms Kant will have to cut down the most dangerous spears and live with the rest. If they haven't managed to kill it over the last 12 years, they will probably not do so over the next 12. Snowdrops in the ivy. Scillas, too, in the more open sections. And more ferns, especially those (such as the polypodies) that don't mind dry situations. Since the time of the dinosaurs, they have learnt to fight for their *Lebensraum* against the bullying marestail.

**T**he Alton sits on a commanding hill, a twin town of Arnside and in b

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to the Lakeland heights beyond

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But enough of views, a salient fe

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Corporat

Michael Prestage

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Recently, though, the increasing popularity of

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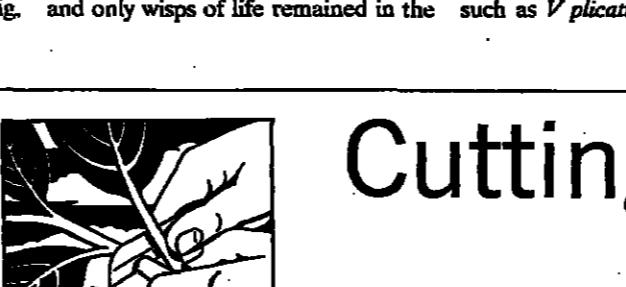
problem with sheep at corporate

events," Merion remarks. "It helps

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## gardening

# Cuttings



**I**n the appropriate surroundings of Stamford's 18th-century assembly rooms and theatre, I finally caught up with *Emma* this week. The film that is, not the television series. Rather a blunt-edged script, it seemed, with some extraordinary added anachronisms. The oddest were the strawberries. The scriptwriters transposed the strawberry-picking scene from Mr Knightley's kitchen garden (in the book it is a fabulously wicked episode with Mrs Elton lauding 'Hautbois' as the only strawberry worth eating) to a wood. That's fair enough. Except that in a wood you don't get strawberries the size of the supermarket 'Cambridge Favourite' which the cast were feeding each other in close-up. And if Gwyneth Paltrow had to do a "He loves me, he loves me not" sequence with daisies studding the lawn at her home, the director should have shot the foreground with vast white marguerites instead. For the real thing read Mavis Batey's new book *Jane Austen and the English Landscape* (Barn Elms, £19.99).

presents. The sale at Whichford Pottery, Whichford, Shipton-on-Stour, Warwickshire, starts today and continues until 8 December. Rupert Golby will demonstrate ways to plant pots today and tomorrow at 11am and 2pm. Sales will also be held at The Buildings, Broughton, Hampshire (two miles west of Stockbridge, off the A30) from 29 November to 1 December and from 6 to 8 December (9am-5pm). Londoners may find it easier to get to Cipol Manor, Bullmoor Lane, Enfield, Middlesex, where Jim Keeling is holding a pottery sale on 7 and 8 December (9am-5pm).

Anna Pavord

## Free Seed Offer

# A view of Lakeland

David Walker strides out from Arnside in Cumbria



From Arnside, walk along the water's edge, dodging anglers' rods and tacks

PHOTOGRAPH: PETER LOOMIS

**T**he Albion sits on a commanding corner in the small Cumbrian town of Arnside and in fine weather the place to be is outside, gazing across the expanse of the Kent River to the Lakeland heights beyond – it's extraordinary how different the view becomes when there is a crop of estuarine mud in the foreground.

But enough of views – a salient fact is that the Albion is a Thwaites pub. Thwaites of Blackburn is one of the reasons beer drinkers in this corner of the North West are still well off for choice, although it's a lot less than it used to be. Once, the white-washed inn, shabbily comfortable inside, looked over the water to Ulverston, home of the great Lake District brewer Hartley's. It's from the dinky promenade in front of the Albion, with plenty of parking space, that our walk starts. Arnside was once a railhead. Coal steamers unloaded on the pier for rail connections inland via Carnforth. Trains still stop but the pier, washed away and rebuilt several times, is now just a small jetty.

It's a quiet place. Excitement is provided by tourists who have ignored the hooter and all the signs, and have got themselves into danger from the fast-rising tides that daily transform the Kent estuary from a sandy haunt of gulls and guillemots into a wide and choppy inlet of the sea.

We are going in a circle – so you can do this walk in reverse order if you like. With the Albion at your back, dodge the anglers' rods and tacks along the water's edge, first follow a path, then walk along the high water line. (If the water really is high you will need to clamber up the bank and walk parallel to the shore, through the oaks and beeches.)

Half a mile or so round the shore – it's fun for twitchers, since the sea fowl are various – you reach New Barns. Either follow the coast, though the path can be muddy, or take a track on the left which seems to be leading into a caravan park. It does, but the saving grace is the way the caravans are screened by trees. The path soon leads into dense woods and, bearing right, a hundred yards or so from the edge of the caravan park, you open out at the shore again at White Creek and pick up the path along the coast.

For a mile or so the walk is a delight: wide seascapes on one side, views across to Walney Island to the north west and as far

as Heysham to the south. Consult the tide tables. When the water is up, it laps at the foot of the low cliffs. When it is low, it reveals acres of sand and furrowed marsh seeming to stretch across Morecambe Bay to the northern shore. (Yes, there is a path, but the local papers lovingly record the deaths of those who failed to follow it in the company of the accredited guides.)

Over the cliff edge, the pine boughs twist and curl. Once they were handholds for marauding Scots who were raiding this coast for cattle as late as the mid 17th century.

Blow, another caravan park (at Far Arnside) – a vista of flounced curtain and chintz suites prompting the unoriginal reflection that to some people a holiday consists of attempting to recreate the minutiae of the circumstances of home.

Continue through the Far Arnside hamlet, cross the road and cut diagonally across the next two fields to join a path running under Middlebarrow to the old pie (or peel, the local spelling is various) tower – an anti-Scots device erected in the 14th century. From the farm at the foot of the tower, the track leads up to the road running between Silverdale and Arnside that you crossed half a mile back.

A hundred or so yards along in the Arnside direction, overlooked on the left by a steep cliff, a footpath sign directs you up and over a stile into the pretty woodland that surrounds the Knott. It's National Trust land, well cared for.

It is a fair climb up to the top of the Knott, just over 500ft inside 400 yards, but it is worth the effort, for it offers a magnificent view across southern Lakeland. Once a fat wedge of Lancashire stretched all the way up over the River Kent into southern Lakeland and across to Barrow-in-Furness. Nowadays, part of Cumbria, it lies before you – the villas of Ulverston, the meadows at the foot of Backbarrow, the Kent narrowing on the way to Kendal. To your right the heights of Yorkshire, and ahead a glimpse of the crags around Scafell.

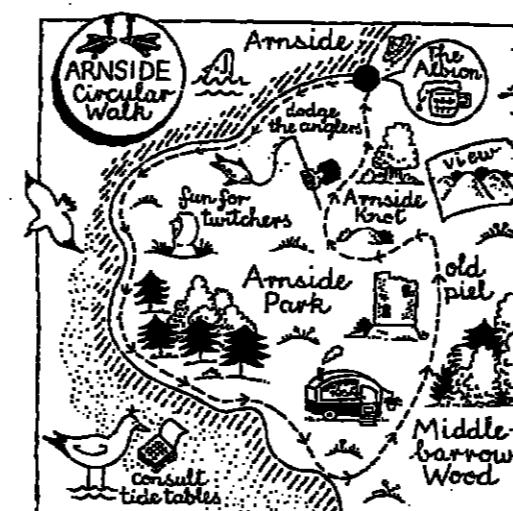
A path leads to the left, down into Arnside, hitting the road just above a big residential home. Either follow the road back down to the Albion, or a steepish path back to the water's edge. Hungry? The baker's next to the pub on its commanding corner site has a small café attached – their home-baked pies are much recommended.

It's a quiet place. Excitement is provided by tourists who have ignored the hooter and all the signs, and have got themselves into danger from the fast-rising tides that daily transform the Kent estuary from a sandy haunt of gulls and guillemots into a wide and choppy inlet of the sea.

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- From the Albion car park walk along the water's edge (if tide is too high clamber up the bank) to New Barns.
- Proceed to White Creek either round coastal path or inland through caravan park.
- Take coastal path to Far Arnside – and consult tide timetables first.
- Once through the hamlet, cross road and take path diagonally through two fields to the old pie tower.
- Join road to Arnside and after a hundred yards veer off on footpath to the Knott. A path leads down left on to road to Arnside. Follow this road back to the Albion.



## Duff Hart-Davis

The discovery that compost may have therapeutic powers has astonished scientists

A man with a garden knows how to make compost. But who can turn "green" waste material into a product with an extraordinary natural power to suppress plant diseases such as club-root in brassicas, brown rot in potatoes and red core in strawberries?

The answer is Eco-Sci, a small company based in Exeter. Although barely three years old, the firm has established itself as a pioneer of composting techniques in the United Kingdom, and has stumbled on a fact which may prove of global significance.

Professional compost-making is thus pressured by an urgent need for innovation, and Eco-Sci is experimenting with new methods of processing ordinary household waste in giant plastic bags known as Eco-pods. Domestic rubbish arrives at its depot in Plymouth by the truck-load.

In theory, the garbage has already been sorted by householders into organic and non-organic categories, but the heap I saw being handled, under a swarm of gulls, contained many choice allegedly-potable items such as loudspeakers, vacuum cleaners and pairs of trainers.

With these removed by hand, the bulk goes into a shredder-scrubber, and then is carried by conveyor belt to a rotary trommel screen, which separates out any surviving pieces 25mm or more across. The fine material, known as

feedstock, is loaded by a self-propelled stuffer into a pod – a tube of heavy-duty green plastic 10ft in diameter.

As the stuffer creeps forward, the pod gradually extends and fills like a giant sausage. At its maximum length of 60 metres, one unit can hold 200 tons, and it has numerous advantages over open-air systems. Not only does it contain smells, dust and potential leakage;

because temperature is accurately controlled by air blown through the pod, the process of decomposition is accelerated, finishing within eight to 12 weeks. The compost which emerges cannot be sold to gardeners, because it may contain chips of glass; but it is perfectly adequate for landscaping over filled-in sites.

As the race is on to recycle everything that can be saved, to dump as little as possible in the ground, yet it is compost's natural ability to fight plant disease which most excites Eco-Sci's staff.

Already they have conducted field trials in Hungary and India, and on Thursday two senior executives returned from an exploratory visit to Egypt. There, it is hoped, their breakthrough may prove a decisive factor in the battle against brown rot, which has become endemic in the country's vital potato crop.

The pulp is then laid out in tapered windrows on banks, four metres wide at the base and 50 metres long. There it remains for about three months, cooking gently, having its temperature taken once a week and being turned by a special machine every fortnight or so, depending on how wet or dry the weather has been.

Finally it is put through a

soil conveyor belt, four metres wide at the base and 50 metres long. There it remains for about three months, cooking gently, having its temperature taken once a week and being turned by a special machine every fortnight or so, depending on how wet or dry the weather has been.

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## Corporate hospitality – a dog's life

Michael Prestage goes sheepdog trialling to relieve executive stress

In the grounds of a number of country houses, business executives are getting the chance to try out the latest link in corporate hospitality: that most rural pursuit, sheepdog trialling. Recently, for instance, executives from the communications giant Ericsson were able to swap business suits and power dressing for jeans and sweatshirts and the chance to try the reality of the BBC's *One Man And His Dog*.

The BBC programme, now in its 20th year, has made sheepdog trialling universally recognised. Ironically, though, the increasing popularity of such events comes at a time when fewer people are training dogs and their use on farms is diminishing as farmers opt for such aids as motorised quad bikes.

A shortage of trained sheepdogs has seen their value soar. At a recent auction at Senybridge, near Brecon, Powys, 90 dogs were auctioned, including one that reached a record price in Britain of £2,600.

Merion Owen began sheepdog trialling as a 10-year-old, following a tradition started by his grandfather. His father is still one of the leading dog trainers in Wales. "I see no problem with doing corporate events," Merion remarks. "It helps make trialling more popular, and



Canine stress reliever

be better because they listen beforehand and take advice. Some of the men think they know it all already."

He admitted that the three dogs he regularly uses know the course and will sometimes do the right thing even if given the wrong command. At busy times they can be going through their paces at two or three events a week.

As one happy participant said, while clutching his shepherd's crook: "This is really good. It is not something I would have the chance to do anywhere else and it is amazing to see how well the dog responds to the commands, even if you have no real idea what you're doing."

Merion puts on similar displays at game shows; it was at a show in Oxford two years ago that he was spotted by Adrian Brown, an organiser of corporate events, who saw an opening for the attraction.

"The days when you could get away with just offering good food and drink are over," Mr Brown explained. "People want to try something different and we have to keep coming up with new ideas. The sheepdog trials are fun, but also give people an insight into the skills involved."

He said the added idea of using ducks was not only practical, but made the whole event something of a novelty. People could have a laugh. And to date nobody has declined to try – an important consideration when one recent client was paying £55,000 a day for the package that included hotel and dinner.

Merion said: "It would be quite difficult to let clients try on their own, but some are good. Women tend to

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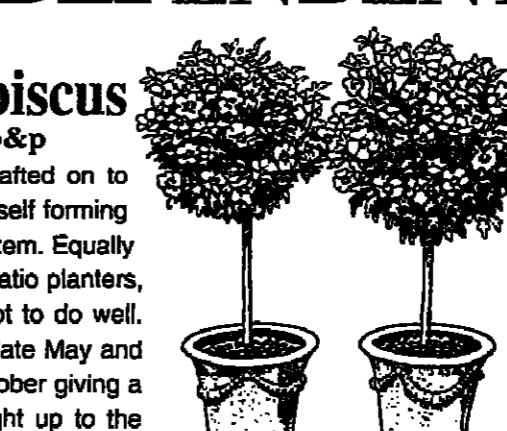
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These showy shrubs are grafted on to stems 60cm tall, the shrub itself forming a bushy head on top of the stem. Equally at home in the border or in patio planters, all they need is a sunny spot to do well. They come into leaf around late May and flower during September/October giving a glorious display of bloom right up to the first frosts.

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# The company of squirrels

Martin Thompson visits Thetford Forest Park

The last American nuclear bomber has roared away on its final sortie from RAF Lakenheath in Suffolk, to the relief of the nightjars and woodlands which inhabit nearby Thetford Forest Park. Britain's largest lowland forest, it covers 50,000 acres and straddles the border between Suffolk and Norfolk. There are no "Keep out" signs and barbed-wire fences here – it's a people-friendly place complete with visitor centre, shop, cafe and picnic lawn (an ambitious feature, no doubt, in this weather, but much used in summer).

The use of space in the park is impressive. This may be a forest, but the plantations of conifers and broad-leaved trees are interspersed with areas of sandy heathland so there are plenty of open areas for outdoor activities. It's a particularly good place for families. For those with smaller children, there's a "Squirrel Maze" and an Adventure Play Course. And there are miles of circular, waymarked trails that can be explored by bike, on horseback or on foot.

A million people a year visit Thetford Forest, yet once you leave the main car park and head off into the unknown, the chances of becoming snarled up in a crowd of fellow hikers are minimal. If you crave only the company of squirrels, there are lesser known trails to follow, fanning out from a dozen smaller car park sites dotted throughout the forest. A map of these sites is available from the High Lodge Visitor Centre. Orienteering maps are also on sale. Adults are offered a choice of three levels, according to experience, and a mini-orienteering circuit, known as the Squirrel's Scamper, is Thetford's way of introducing children to the sport.

If you have resisted family pressure to fit a bike rack to the car, a range of mountain bikes, off-road tandems and trailer bikes are available for hire at High Lodge every day in the summer, and on weekends and in half-term weeks during the winter months. The cost of renting a child's mountain bike is £5 per half day.

Thetford is managed on behalf of the state by Forest Enterprise, which has the delicate task of balancing the needs of recreational users with those of com-



Hidden in the trees: "there are family-orientated activities to entice you to hit the TV off-button"

PHOTOGRAPH: BRIAN HARRIS

mercial forestry and nature conservation. The forest may be a £3m a year timber-producing business but part of management time is spent in brainstorming ideas for imaginative events to increase the forest's appeal to visitors of all ages.

Events take place throughout the year and include: deer safaris, fungal forays, guided bike rides, murder mystery trails and nocturnal quests to see Thetford's rare nightjars.

Thetford's newly-introduced population of red squirrels may be in hibernation, but throughout the winter months there are family-orientated activities here to entice you to hit the

TV off-button and line up the wellies beside the front door. These include Twilight Zone guided walks, a chance to see the forest at night, and Suzy Squirrel's Winter Nuts for the under-10s, who are invited to become sleuths tracking down the squirrel's hidden store.

Our family has become very enthusiastic about Thetford Forest Park. On Sundays we tend to roam through the forest on our bikes. And a few weeks ago, at Hallowe'en we joined an 80-strong group for an evening of ghostly forest tales, with stage-managed sightings of spectral mums flitting through the foliage.

There is no need to wait for an organised activity to get the best out of Thetford; you can always do as we did and import your own event. In August we held our eldest daughter's 10th birthday party in the forest. Tea was consumed on the picnic lawn after an energetic six-mile bike ride. It should have been easy enough to follow the trail, but somehow we still managed to get ourselves lost, if only temporarily. After the ritual cutting of the cake, the girls disappeared for an hour of rope swinging in the adventure playground. The verdict from the birthday girl? "Brilliant fun ... total exhaustion. The best party I have ever had."

*Thetford Forest Park is close to the A11 and is less than 45 minutes by car from Cambridge, Norwich and Peterborough. The High Lodge Forest Visitor Centre is open during the winter at weekends and in half-term weeks, and every day throughout the summer. Winter events at the park include story-telling (with tales of the forest) at 1.30pm on Sunday, 1 December, a mince pie walk from 10.30am on Sunday 8 December, and a barbecue with carol singing from 1pm on Sunday, 15 December. For more details call 01842 810271. Events cost from £2 for an adult and £1 per child.*

*For bike hire details, call Flinstone Adventures on 0589 100831.*

## Are we nearly there?

A weekly round-up of outings for children

**T**his is National Tree Week, and communities all over the country are planting forests and showing children how trees contribute to our health and environment.

**Hedge for health**  
Wear old clothes and gloves to plant a hedge. Meet at The Garden House, St Nicholas Park, Jubilee Rd, Newcastle-upon-Tyne Sun 24 November, 10.30am-12.15pm (0191-284 6884)

**See how it burns**  
Enjoy a charcoal burning demonstration, collect acorns to grow oaks and finish with a barbecue (bring your own food and drink). Devilshoys Wood Trust Reserve, Perranporth (btw Truro and Falmouth) Today 2pm-5pm (01872-73939)

**Know the worst about owls**  
Examine owl pellets to discover the birds' prey, before heading off to the woodland and play area. Ruther Valley Holidays, Rutherford Bridge, nr Bodmin Sun 24 Nov (01822-73939)

**Plant young fruit trees**  
And decorate ancient oaks. There's also music, crafts, story-telling and a tree trail. All outdoors, so wrap up warm. Meet at Dawson's Hill, Dunstan's Rd, off Uplands Rd, E Dulwich London SE22 Today (0171-278 6612) 12pm-1.30pm

**Learn from the professionals**  
Pershore College of Horticulture offer Guided tours of their arboretum, and demonstrations of tree-planting. Buy your own young tree to take home. Avon Bank, Pershore, Hereford, Worcestershire. Today, 10am-1pm (01865 552443)

**Plant a time capsule**  
... among the new saplings, Near Seaford, W Lothian, Scotland. Sun 24 November, 11am (01501 822015)

**Folklore and carving**  
Get to grips with wood in an activities day which combines tree dressing, puppets, wood carving and hurdle making. Bring refreshments. Tanners Hatch Youth Hostel, Rammure Common, Surrey, Sun 24 November 10am-4pm (01372-421528) Adults £10, u-18s £5

**Be taken for a ride at Burton-upon-Trent**  
After working to preserve the forest canopy, kids get a ride from Shire Horses. Newton Rd Park, Winslow, Burton-upon-Trent. Today, 10am-3pm (01283 508598)

Liese Spencer

## You go away for a week and...

To travel is, hopefully, a better thing than to arrive back in the office. For a good definition of the word "travel", try this: spend a week drifting around the Caribbean, and then on Thursday wander back into work and enquire, casually, "Has anything been happening?"

The salvo of ripe language by way of response affirmed that, indeed, quite a lot had been going on: snowstorms, the closure of the London Underground for three hours because of power cuts, and the fire in the Channel Tunnel.

Two components of this trinity of calamities have diminished, but the third will have long-term repercussions for Britain's travellers. Among them, our illustrator Sally Kindberg (whose work appears on page 13). After her journey from Brussels this week, she vowed "I don't even want to go on Eurostar again."

At lunchtime on Tuesday, the final leg to Waterloo,



Simon Calder

Ms Kindberg was in Brussels, trying to catch a train to Waterloo. The fire had taken place the previous evening, so she assumed the train operator, Eurostar, would have contingency plans up and running. The problem was, the company didn't seem to have any.

"Nobody knew what was going on. One Eurostar official offered me the numbers of three airlines, but wouldn't let me use his phone." The queue for the public phones was so long that she gave up and waited to find out what Eurostar would do with the hundreds of stranded passengers.

Eventually a plan was hatched. Travellers would go by Eurostar across the French border to Lille, change trains and head for Calais. A bus to the docks would connect with a ferry over to Dover. Here, waiting coaches would take everyone to Ashford. Another Eurostar train would cover the final leg to Waterloo,

arriving in London by 9.30pm. If the theory of this six-stage journey sounds unappealing, the practice was much, much worse. Early on, the passengers waited an hour at Lille station for the Calais train. To compensate, perhaps, the waiting buses at Calais were super-heated. This would have been fine – except that the passengers were stuck on the buses for nearly three hours.

It turned out that they were waiting for a SeaFrance ferry. This was a curious choice of shipping line on the part of Eurostar, since there are two much larger companies – P&O and Stena Line – that each operates at least one

ferry to Dover every hour. The wait on the coach was better than the voyage. "It seemed to me there were too many people," says Ms Kindberg. "There were not enough seats, so loads of us ended up sitting on the floor." They had been issued with refreshment vouchers, but these were valid only from one café – which soon sported a queue of serpentine proportions.

The search for food became academic. Ms Kindberg lost her appetite when some fellow passengers began a demonstration of synchronised seasickness. "Many of them had chosen the train to avoid the Channel crossing. Some people were getting hysterical."

During the two-hour sailing, passengers were assured that they would receive a refund on their Eurostar tickets – a promise, says Ms Kindberg, on which the company reneged. But the immediate concern was to reach London.

"We had to change buses between leaving the boat at Dover and reaching Ashford station. Then the train took ages to reach Waterloo, where we finally arrived just before 2am. I was lucky because I live in London. Lots of other passengers who were heading further had serious problems.

Eurostar was offering to find hotels for people, but refused to pay for them. One young French girl who was supposed to be travelling on to York said she was going to spend the night waiting at King's Cross."

Ms Kindberg managed to persuade her against hanging around London's hub of prostitution and low-life, then set about finding a cab home. By now, fights were breaking out among frustrated passengers arguing over taxis. "One driver told me that there had been plenty of cabs earlier in the night, but they'd all been taken by Eurostar staff to get home."

There was no sign of the promised refund, either. Ms Kindberg finally procured a complaints form, whose small print revealed that she could expect only a free trip on Eurostar. "There's no way I want another ticket," she says.

The strength of feeling in her voice mirrored the reaction when I asked if there had been any travel news of note this week. I would have offered Ms Kindberg some duty-free rum had I not already been obliged to use it to pacify colleagues.

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# An odyssey of cheers and tears

Amie Wilson and his girlfriend Lucy Dicker skied 10 miles a day for 365 days with 790 vertical miles in 240 resorts around the world. Then tragedy struck. By Stephen Wood

**O**n 1 January 1994, 49-year-old Arnie Wilson set off with his girlfriend on an adventure. They skied at Jackson Hole, Wyoming, that day. The following morning they left, with the intention of skiing every day for the whole year, at an average of 10 miles a day and in as many different resorts as possible. learnt to ski on a school trip in his teens. So when he took his own family to Verbier, with a commission to write an article for a skiing magazine, he had what he describes as "that dangerous combination of ego, enthusiasm and lack of ability. At the end of the first day I had to be rescued by the piste patrol and brought down the mountain".

Their itinerary was to take them all around the world, following the snow from Japan to Chile, from India to New Zealand. And on 1 January, 1995, they were back in Jackson Hole, the adventure over, but not the mountain.

After that trip, he spent as much time skiing as his job — as a reporter for the old Southern TV region — would allow. Something of a local celebrity, he was

Jackson Hole, the adventure completed. By skilfully negotiating airline timetables, taking advantage of the warp that the International Date Line puts on the calendar, and skiing at four o'clock in the morning when necessary, they had achieved their target.

often asked to open fêtes ("if the weatherman and the studio presenter had said no"); and company policy was to allow a day off in lieu for such appearances. "So every time I opened a fête, I got a day's skiing." In 1984 he went freelance and was asked to do some writing articles for the

achieved their target.

By New Year's Eve, in Keystone, Colorado, they had skied every day of their year, and reached the 10-miles-a-day average; their diary also recorded that they had skied in 240 resorts, travelled 109,480 miles (four times around the globe) and descended 790 vertical miles (144 times down Mount Everest) - and that Arnie had had 178 falls, to his girlfriend's 180.

The story of their experiences is told in Arnie Wilson's book, to be published next week. It is called *Tears in the Snow*, because

asked to do some skiing articles for the *Financial Times*. When its regular skiing columnist died, Arnie inherited the job, which he has now held for 10 years.

It was the travel editor of *Vogue* who, in 1990, floated the possibility of skiing in every month of the year. Arnie wrote a fictional account of such a venture for the magazine, and then toyed with the idea of making it fact. "It was just a silly idea," he says - until he mentioned it to Lucy, a Frenchwoman who worked as general manager for a ski tour company in Lon-

week. It is called *Team Spirit* now, because the adventure had a tragic postscript. On 6 April last year, Arnie's 41-year-old girlfriend, Lucy Dicker, was killed in a skiing accident at La Grave, in France. Arnie Wilson took up skiing seriously only at the age of 30. A dedicated tobog-

annger. He had just completed his 10th London, and with whom he was already having an affair. "It was almost as if it was what she had been waiting for: Lucy always dreamed of having a great adventure. When she said, 'Let's do it together', it became a possibility. And then it gath-

Only at the age of 36. A dedicated tobogganist as a child, when his family lived in Switzerland, he had - as he thought - it became a possibility. And then it gained its own momentum."

11. *Leucosia* (Leucosia) *leucosia* (L.) *leucosia* (L.)

turers: she was short-sighted but too vain to wear glasses; he was overweight; and both seemed to have had a limitless ability to get lost - not just driving at night in a hailstorm on New Zealand's Mount Hutt, but even in their own hotel. The book details the calamities ("It makes a better story when things don't go smoothly" says Arnie), including their truck blowing up in Argentina, Arnie carrying on skiing despite wearing a catheter tied with a piece of string, and a desperate involved being as frank about how difficult she could be, as about his love for her. Of course, they skied some great runs: the "outrageous" (Arnie's description) off-piste Ridge area of Bridger Bowl, Montana, a long swoop from 8,000ft; the Vallée Blanche, a 6,500ft vertical down the glacier from Mont Blanc to Chamonix; and the silky, serious powder of Mount Dobson in New Zealand, a 3,500ft vertical which Lucy thought was the greatest run of her life.

to deal with a urinary problem, desperate (but always successful) attempts to find a place to ski when the light was fading and the snow melting - and, much more distressing to read, the terrible rows they had. Arnie was adamant that the book should be true to Lucy's memory, and this run of her life.

But their experiences won't convert many to summer skiing, particularly in India (where they found no working ski-lifts) and Japan (where they clocked up two hours' skiing on Tokyo's indoor snow-piste, and then £100 on a cab fare into

ing myself. 'If people die of a broken heart, why am I still alive?'" Skiing again, he says, started him on "the long haul back to sanity"; and the help of another writer, William Styron, enabled him to complete the book.

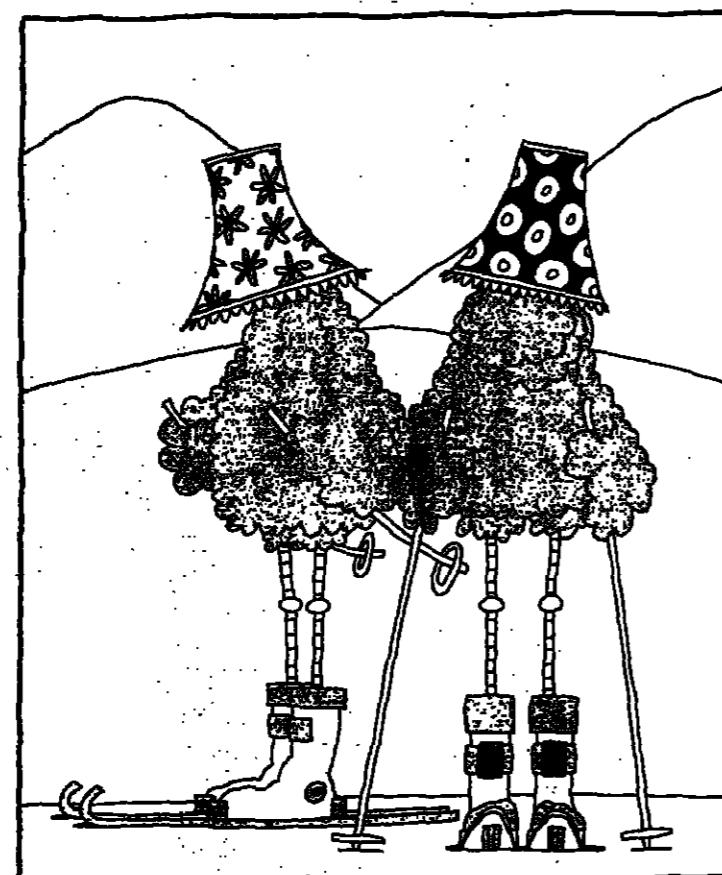
Hall, enabled him to complete the book. "With each process - writing, rewriting, proof-reading - I found that at the beginning of the book I was happy, because I was with Lucy again, planning our adventure. I didn't once think that she was alive; yet I felt the warmth that I associated with being with her. But every time I worked on the last two chapters, I could hardly see the screen through my tears."

*'Tears in the Snow: a True Story of Love, Courage and Danger'* is published on 29 November (Blake Publishing, £15.99).

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## The crash I didn't see

My biggest mistake

Investment guru  
Bob Beckman

**M**y biggest mistake was in May 1972, when I predicted the Financial Times 30-share index, which was the main stock market measure at the time, would go through 700.

The index had just moved above the 520 level for the first time in about eight years, and I thought that move was pointing to much higher prices to come. What happened was that the index rose another 25 points, and then turned around and plunged. Between May 1972 and January 1976, it lost nearly 70 per cent of its value.

That particular mistake didn't really cost me that much money in terms of my own personal investments, but it has been used as a whip for the media to beat me for the past 24 years.

The media started to pay attention to my work in the late 1960s, and one of my forecasts was that the FT30 would reach the level of 520, not go much higher and then fall to 300 before reaching a

level of 520 again. In other words, I was saying a bear market was imminent – and it was.

It was. I was in disagreement with everyone else. You don't win popularity contests if you're right when everybody else is right.

When that bear market hit bottom at 305 in February 1970, I became very bullish and said: 'Now is the time to buy shares, when everybody else is bearish.' And I was right again. The index got up to the 520s in May 1972, and then, because I thought they'd climb further, I was finally, ruefully wrong.

Journalists said: 'Now is the time to develop a contrary Beckman indicator. Beckman was bullish at the very top, so whenever Beckman is bullish, turn bearish, and whenever Beckman is bearish, turn bullish.' That went on for years, and it all started with that one bad forecast.

When that 1972-1975 recession hit, I didn't expect

it. I began to question myself on why. How could I possibly miss one of the worst recessions we'd seen since the Great Depression?

So I started to examine a lot of the economic tools which I had been using and the financial tools which had given me that target of 700 for the 30-share index. I started to question it and began to look at some of the long-term cyclical economists that I didn't pay too much attention to while I was at university. I should have been paying attention, because they were the type of people who would have been able to forecast the 1972-75 recession.

As a result of that, I changed my way of economic thinking. I abandoned all the micro-economic tools I had been using, and started looking at the economy on a much more macro basis, and started to look at long-term cyclical trends. It was a real watershed in my approach to the investment and the economy. It taught me that I didn't know

everything and that I should look at things in a much broader scope, which I have been doing ever since. It's made me much more cautious and much more conservative. And I haven't made a forecasting error of anything like that magnitude since.

I forecast the 1987 Crash 10 days before it happened on LBC and in my publication, *Investors' Bulletin*. So many people claim to have predicted the 1987 Crash, it's hard to believe how it could ever have happened. But I did forecast it, and that's well-documented. On the surface, everything in the UK and US equity markets looked fairly calm. But, beneath the surface, there was a tremendous amount of turbulence. Technically, it just looked like it was crumbling and big divergences were building up between the leading indices and the broad market.

I had sold out before then, because I'm a value investor, and with my own personal money, I just didn't like the

values that equities were offering. I didn't sell out because I saw a Crash was coming. I sold out because I liked bond markets better.

What I try to explain to people is that markets are non-linear dynamic systems. That means today's influence may not be the same as tomorrow's influence. Today we may have share prices going up because interest rates fall. Next week we may have them going up because interest rates do the opposite. There is no such thing as a fixed cause and effect. The only hitching post an investor has is value. When he sees markets offering good value, good yields, good dividend covers, reasonable price earnings ratios, that's the time to be there. When he sees markets that offer poor relative values, the investor should pull in his horns."

Bob Beckman's latest book is "Housequake" (Rushmore Winn, £14.95). He was talking to Paul Slade.

## Taxmen give notice on redundancy pay

Employees will lose out, writes Nic Cicutti

**H**undreds of thousands of people facing the grim prospect of redundancy may be hit even harder by an additional tax sting from the Inland Revenue, unless action is taken now to minimise the blow.

Revenue officials say they intend to tax payments in lieu of notice made to staff who are made redundant. This much stricter interpretation of tax rules, announced in August, is part of the taxman's bid to claw back some of the estimated £1.5bn foregone each year from payments made to staff who lose their jobs.

At present, employees do not have to pay tax on the first £30,000 of their redundancy payoff.

This is the statutory amount based on gross salary, age and number of years' service. Maximum payments are £205 a week, up to a total of £6,150. But many companies, either through union pressure or because they feel generous, have redundancy agreements considerably in excess of this amount.

When employees lose their jobs, employers will usually top up any redundancy payment with the salary normally paid in lieu of notice, be that one, three or six months worth of money. As long as the combined amount was under the £30,000 limit, no tax was levied on it.

The Inland Revenue has always contested this practice, arguing that payments in lieu of notice (or Pilots, as experts call them) are part of a separate contractual agreement between a company and its employee and therefore subject to tax.

In August, the taxman



The only way is down: Redundant employees will be hit with an extra sting from the Revenue

pounced. The Revenue said it no longer intended to permit Pilots to be untaxed. One month later, Thorn EMI lost a case linked to the same issue which it had argued before the Special Commissioners, arbitrators in tax matters. The company is considering an appeal to the High Court.

The upshot has been a mad scramble by employers to get round the new restriction. One common device is to remove any reference to Pilots, whether at the company's discretion or otherwise, from employees' contracts of employment.

Employers hope that by doing so, the Revenue will be

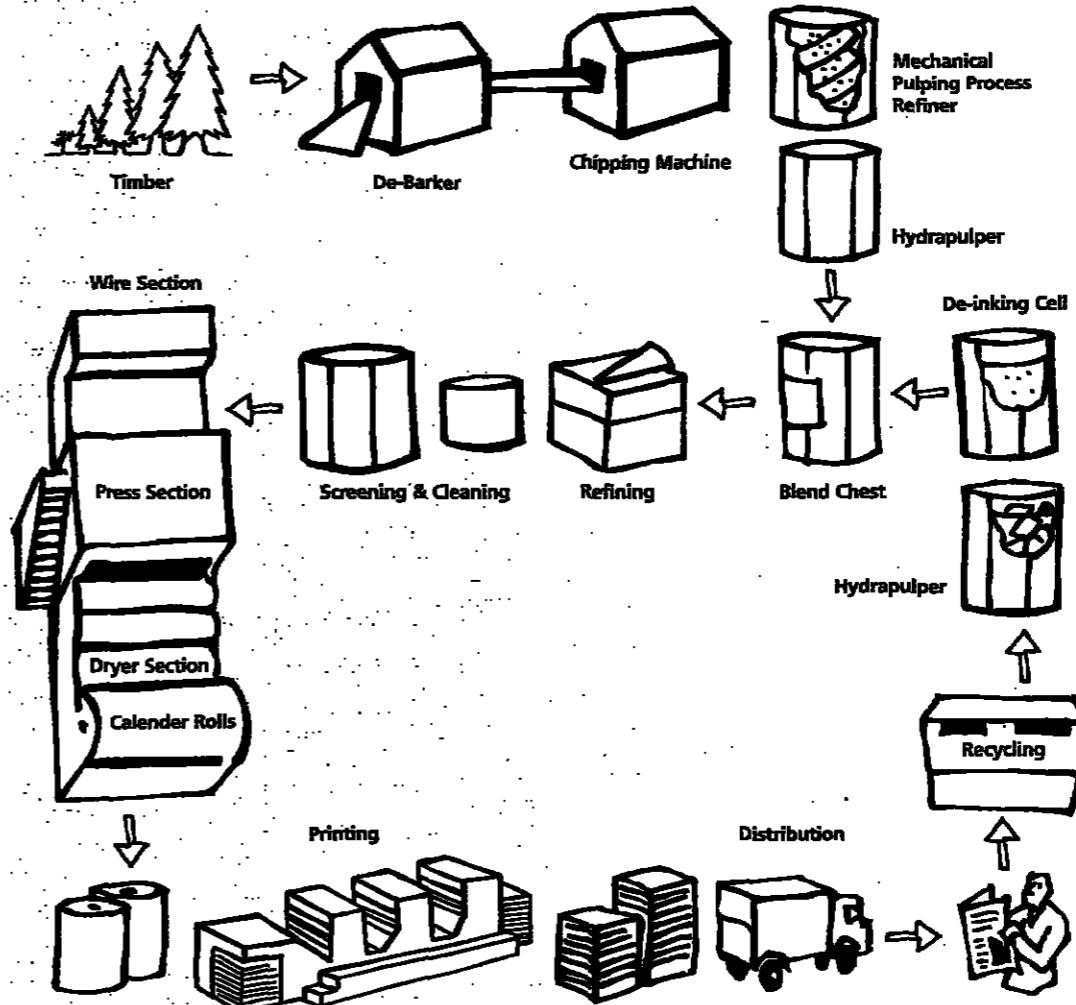
unable to argue that any notice paid to staff alongside their redundancy payments forms part of a contractual agreement between both sides.

John Whiting, a tax partner at Price Waterhouse, the chartered accountants, and also chairman of the Chartered Institute of Taxation, says: 'The Revenue's position is a pre-emptive strike against these payments. I suppose we should at least be grateful that they have decided to stake out their position so clearly.'

'It makes eminent sense to strike out such a clause [of pay in lieu of notice] in a contract of employment.

Ultimately, it all comes down to how much you trust your boss. In today's climate, that may not be further than you can throw him.'

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SCOTTISH WIDOWS

Foreign Exchange Rates							
STERLING				DOLLAR			
Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	Spot	1 month	3 months	D-Mark
US	1.6889	1.69	1.68-35	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.6871
Canada	2.2840	2.24-49	1.64-156	1.3398	24-25	25-27	0.6850
Germany	2.5330	2.51-61	2.05-193	1.4950	30-38	30-37	1.0000
France	1.5845	21.0	1.56	5.0300	86-81	86-88	3.3850
Italy	2.6205	31-45	26-120	1.4978	26-35	91-101	889.08
Japan	108.11	105.81	101-273	111.32	48-47	149-147	74.2653
ECU	1.3174	21-18	18-61	1.2889	13-14	44-45	0.5201
Belgium	52.208	55-78	43-80	30.955	75	20-17	20.6111
Denmark	8.7327	22-177	853-938	5.7395	98-79	236-247	5.6242
Netherlands	2.8415	82-74	240-225	1.9815	30-37	121-115	1.1218
Ireland	0.5095	5-1	16-10	1.2605	53	10-6	0.3846
Norway	10.677	150-90	330-270	8.1612	50-55	119-106	4.2151
Spain	218.03	12-21	31-48	126.05	18-20	40-40	84.1022
Sweden	11.181	15-8	44-48	6.6165	41-16	152-101	4.4141
Switzerland	2.1405	85-78	228-228	1.2867	40-37	119-114	0.6230
Australia*	2.0848	10-16	15-25	1.2236	14-16	33-35	5.1533
Hong Kong	13.088	58-62	240-186	7.7321	20	2-7	1.6812
Malaysia	4.2588	0-0	0-0	2.5201	27-30	80-85	0.5364
New Zealand	2.3719	94-71	153-183	1.4035	54-55	97-98	2.5021
Saudi Arabia	5.3378	0-0	0-0	3.7505	14	5-6	0.5347
Singapore	2.3676	0-0	0-0	1.6011	24-19	70-85	

OTHER SPOT RATES							
Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling
Argentina	1.8800	0.9299	Nigeria	137.244	81.2000		
Austria	17.5280	10.5490	Oman	0.6807	0.3650		
Brazil	1.7424	1.0309	Pakistan	52.7430	40.0795		
China	14.0505	8.3011	Philippines	44.3831	26.2650		
Egypt	5.7527	3.4050	Portugal	266.046	151.320		
Finland	7.6536	4.5232	Oman	6.1515	3.6410		
Greece	2000.87	1717.00	Russia	9288.34	5488.00		
Greece	326.715	238.490	South Africa	7.7988	4.6130		
India	80.3277	65.7000	Taiwan	46.5143	27.5200		
Kuwait	0.5044	0.3884	UAE	6.2061	3.6730		

Note: Forward rates quoted high to low or a discount (subtract from spot rate), those quoted low to high are at a premium to spot rate. \*Offer rates quoted as midpoints. For the latest foreign exchange rates call 0891 222 3033. Call cost 5p per minute (cheapest rate 4p other lines).

Tourist Rates							
Country	Country	Country	Country	Country	Country	Country	Country
2 Boys	2 Boys	2 Boys	2 Boys	2 Boys	2 Boys	2 Boys	2 Boys
Australia(Dollar)	2.0460	0.9299	France(France)	8.8279	New Zealand(Dollars)	2.2789	
Austria(Schilling)	17.3220	10.5490	Germany(German)	2.4502	Norway(Kroner)	10.2785	
Belgium(Franc)	50.4200	1.0309	Greece(Greece)	350.3000	Portugal(Escudos)	247.5000	
Canada(Dollar)	2.1985		Hong Kong(Dollars)	12.6000	Spain(Pesetas)	205.4000	
Cyprus(Pound)	0.7425	0.4221	Ireland(Pounds)	0.9702	Sweden(Kronor)	2.0554	
Denmark(Kroner)	8.4450	0.4216	Italy(Lira)	2482.0000	Switzerland(Franc)	2.0554	
Poland(Golden)	2.7460	1.0000	Japan(Yen)	184.5200	Turkey(Lira)	158840.0000	
Finland(Mark)	7.5330	0.3884	Malta(Lira)	0.5760	United States(Dollars)	1.6300	

Interest Rates							
Country	Country	Country	Country	Country	Country	Country	Country
UK	Base	Discount	Discount	US	Prime	8.75%	Japan
France	3.20%	Lombard	2.50%	Discount	5.00%	Discount	Discount
Italy	7.5%	Promo	4.75%	Fed Funds	5.25%	Belgium	2.50%
Netherlands	2.50%	Discount	5.00%	10-Day Repo	6.75%	Discount	Central
Advances		Discount	3.25%	Swedes	7.50%	Switzerland	3.00%

Bond Yields							
Country	5 yr	10 yr	yield %	Country	5 yr	10 yr	yield %
UK	7.1%	7.1%	7.1%	US	8.75%	8.75%	0.5%
France	6.00%			Spain	5.4%	5.4%	
Intervention	3.20%			Italy	9.1%	9.1%	7.61
Italy	7.5%	7.1%	6.2	Belgium	5%	4.77	5.98
Discount	7.5%	7.5%	7.08	Sweden	13%	6.21	7.07
Netherlands	2.50%			Switzerland	0%	0%	0.1%
Advances				Japan	4.12%	4.12%	

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Netherlands	2.50%			Switzerland	0%	0%	0.1%
Advances				Japan	4.12%	4.12%	

Money Market Rates							
Country	Country	Country	Country	Country	Country	Country	Country
UK	3900	3950	4000	4050	4100	4150	4200
US	1009/23	70/37	41/58	21/33			
Denmark	134/59	100/55	89/78	44/105			
Finland	161/58	129/75	98/65	73/122			
FTSE 100	174/75	140/92	113/115	86/139			
FTSE 250	4407/0						

Yields calculated on local basis. \* Denotes new benchmark.

Liffe Financial Futures							
Contract	Settlement price	High/Low for day	Est/Conts traded	Open Interes			
Long Gt	110.22	110-106	62033	130822			
German Gvt Bd	100.00	101-105	179650	246313			
Italian Bond	127.27	127-126	79476	109025			
Janian Gvt Bd	124.48	124-125	2577	nn			
3 Mth Sterling	93.55	93-93	8369	97.88			
Mar 97	93.26	93-92	11430	108849			
3 Mth Euromark	96.79	96-79	20471	205585			
Mar 97	96.79	96-77	26795	191426			
3 Mth Eurodra	92.89	92-92	12823	67854			
Mar 97	93.54	93-93	14132	68184			
3 Mth Euroyen	97.91	97-92	0	0			
Mar 97	97.91	97-93	6318	32048			
3 Mth ECU	95.82	95-84	1096	7686			
Mar 97	95.83	95-84	403	6184			
FTSE 100	3974.0	3967.0	8381	55370			
FTSE 250	4407.0		0	4201			

Commodities							
Commodity	Cash	3 mths	Volume	LME Stocks	chng		
Aluminum HG	1478.5775	1497.8	91341	92575	+		
Aluminum Alloy	1520.30	1505.55	1115	1500	-		
Copper A	294.50	292.00	94580	96244	-		
Lead	580.145	570.00	11233	11475	-		
Nickel	670.50	684.50	13663	14678	+		
Tin	807.46	807.40	547	9235	-		
Zinc	1052.43	1055.40	2605	32475	-		
Barley Convention exchange rates	85	85	51	51	-		
exchange rates	1.5776	1.4800	111.19	Stock volumes & change in tonnes as at Tue 15 Nov 95			

PRECIOUS METALS							
Country	Country	Country	Country	Country	Country	Country	Country
Platinum	364.25	225.00	297	237	Krugerrands	372.382	222.00
Palladium	118.50	70.00	201	120	Socw	89.97	51.00
Silver spot	495.50	295.50	107	64	Nobles	381.357	227.00
Gold B/L	378.10	225.00	54	32	Maple Leaf	379.388	226.00

Sources: Sun, 13 Nov 95

AGRICULTURAL							
Commodity	Coffee	Barley	Potatoes	Potatoes	Country	Country	Country
UKFF	Stom	LFFE	Stom	LFFE	ATA	Elona	
Dec	923	Nov	1544	Nov	56.00	56.00	
Mar	923	Jan	1448	Jan	53.50	54.00	
May	945	Mar	1380	Mar	54.50	55.00	
Vet	9511	Vet	2550	Vet	125	125	
White Sugar							120 Pounds
UKFF							
Mar	302.8	Nov	320.0	Nov	94.35	94.35	
May	304.10	Dec	325.00	Dec	98.35	98.35	
Aug	303.80	Vet	174	Vet	98.25	98.75	
Vet	749						
Other Softs (Agricultural)	as at 21/11/95						
Non-US	Mar (Nov)**	Stom	127.00	Dec	Soya Oil	FL 100kg	47.00
Copra (T)	Stom	148.00	100/55	Non-US	Coconut Oil (T)	Stomme	785.00
Cotton (M)	USCot/ib	72.48	70.25	Non-US	Sunflower Oil	Stomme	520.00
Wool	134/59	100/55	Dec	Dec-Jan	Repedase Oil	FL100kg	52.00
Rubber	Moist	32.00	22.00	Dec-Jan	Groundnut Oil	Stomme	670.00

\*\*Non-US origin. \*Philippines/Indonesia. \*\*Malaysia. \*N Europe. Source: FT Information Services

Top three performing funds of each sector are highlighted in bold. Top of each sector. The two and three-year figures are the value of £1 invested over one year or three years at mid prices with no income reinvested. All funds are more than one year old. Fund size taken at the end of the previous month. The three highest performing portfolios offer a minimum of 10 years of history. Source: FT Information, CISW.

QA Prov Mutual Inv Ord	803.5	103.4	Standard Fund F Inv	175.0
QA Prov Mutual Mgd Ord	561.7	561.3	Standard Fund Inv Index	451.0
Qm Managed	354.1	373.1	Standard Managed	542.0
QRE Equity Acc	1252.7	1234.9	Sun America Equity	112.0
QRE International Acc	744.9	704.7	Sun America Fund Inv	813.5
QRE Managed Acc	735.0	806.2	Sun Life Diversified Distribution	158.2
Sil Standard Equity	743.0	702.1	Sun Life Diversifier	250.0
Sil Standard Managed Ser A	846.0	610.8	Sun Life Equity Acc.	178.1
Sil Standard Managed Ser B	875.5	711.1	Sun Life Inv Managed Acc	1000.0
J P Morgan Small Cap Fund Inv	786.1	105.5	Sun Life Can Castle Eq	14.0
Laurensen International Inv Fund Acc	318.1	324.8	Sun Life Can Center Inv	14.0
Laurensen Managed Acc Inv Fund	320.0	253.3	Sun Life Can Maple Leaf Eq Inv	14.0
Laurensen UK Equity Acc	320.0	573.8	Sun Life Can Maple Leaf Inv Mgt Inv	14.0
Legal & General Equity Acc	1414.9	1435.4	TIG Equity	14.0
Legal & General International Acc	1414.9	1435.4	TIG Homeowner	14.0



## Save and prosper: the best borrowing and saving rates

	Telephone	% Rate and period	Max adv %	Fee	Incentive	Redemption penalty
<b>HOME BASED</b>						
Fixed rates						
Scarborough BS	0800 590547	0.20 for 1 year	85	0.75%	—	1st 5 yrs: 7.04% of sum repaid
Irish Permanent	0181 746 3334	4.35 for 2 years	75	£250	—	1st 4 yrs: 6 mths interest
Northern Rock	0800 591500	7.49 to 1/1/02	95	£295	—	1st 6 yrs: 5% of sum repaid
Variable rates						
Scarborough BS	0800 590547	0.65% for 1 year	90	—	—	1st 5 yrs: 6.33% of sum repaid
Principality BS	01222 344188	3.50% to 1/1/98	75	—	—	To 30/10/01: discount reclaim
Northern Rock BS	0800 591500	4.24% to 1/1/00	95	£295	Refund valn fee	1st 7 yrs: 5% of sum repaid
First time buyers fixed rates						
Bristol & West BS	0800 608088	1.95 to 1/10/97	90	275	—	To 30/9/91: 6-8 mths interest
Newcastle BS	0191 244 2468	6.49 to 1/1/00	95	£295	—	To 1/1/03: 5% of advance
Cheltenham & Glos 0800 272131	7.59 for 5 years	95	£495	Free valuation	—	1st 6 yrs: 6 mths int
First time buyers variable rates						
Principality BS	01222 344188	1.00 to 1/1/97	90	—	—	To 31/10/01: discount reclaim
Greenwich BS	0181 8588212	3.49% for 2 years	95	£250	—	1st 5 yrs: discount reclaimed
Northern Rock BS	0800 591500	5.24% to 1/1/02	95	—	Refund valn fee	1st 7 yrs: 5% of sum repaid
<b>PERSONAL LOANS</b>						
	Telephone	APR %	Max LTV	Fixed monthly payments (£3,000 over 3 years)		
				With insurance	Without insurance	
Unsecured	Northern Rock BS	0345 421421	12.9%	£112.66	£102.59	
Direct Line	0141 2489966	13.9%	£112.86	£101.33		
Nationwide BS	via local branch	14.9	£113.15	£102.49		
Secured (second charge)				Max LTV Advance	Term	
Clydesdale Bank	0800 240024	7.5	Neg	£3K - £15K	6 mths to 25 years	
Royal B of Scotland 0131 523 7023	8.7	70%	£25K - £100K	3 years to retirement		
Barclays Bank	0800 000929	9.3/9.5	80%	£10K - £75K	5 to 25 years	
<b>OVERDRAFTS</b>						
	Telephone	Account	Authorised % pm	Unauthorised % pm	APR	
Woolwich BS	0800 400900	Current	0.76	9.5	2.18	29.5
Alliance & Leicester 0500 959595	Alliance		0.76	9.5	2.20	29.8
Abbey National 0500 200500	Current		0.94	11.9	2.18	29.5
<b>CREDIT CARDS</b>						
	Telephone	Card Type	Min Income	Rate % pm	APR	
Standard	Co-operative Bank	0800 109000	Advantage Visa	—	0.64%	7.90%
Robert Fleming/S&P	0800 829024	MasterCard/Visa	—	0.9167	11.50	nil
RBS Advanta	0800 077770	Visa	—	0.94N	11.90N	nil
Gold cards					56 days	
Co-operative Bank	0345 212212	Visa	£20,000	0.50	10.50	£120
RBS Advanta	0800 077770	Visa	£20,000	0.94N	11.90N	nil
Royal B of Scotland	01702 362890	Visa	£20,000	1.05N	14.50N	£35
46 days					56 days	
<b>STRIKE CARDS</b>						
	Telephone	Payment by direct debit		Payment by other methods		
John Lewis	via store	1.39	18.0	1.39	18.0	
Marks and Spencer	01244 681681	1.87	24.8	1.97	26.3	
Sears	via store	1.94	25.9	2.20	29.8	
<small>APR Annual percentage rate. B+C Building and Contents insurance LTV Loan to value ASU Accident, sickness and unemployment E Available to comprehensive motor insurance policyholders aged over 22 years.</small>						
<small>N Introductory rate for a limited period.</small>						
<small>All rates subject to change without notice.</small>						
<small>Source: MONEYFACTS 01692 500577 21 November 1996</small>						

	Telephone number	Account	Notice or term	Deposit	Rate %	Interest interval
Portman BS	01202 232444	Instant Access	Instant	£100	4.50	Year
Co-Operative Bank	0345 252000	Pathtinder	Instant	£5,000	4.75	Month
Direct Line	0181 667 1121	Instant Savings	Instant	£10,000	5.50	Year
Direct Line	0181 667 1121	Instant Savings	Instant	£50,000	5.75	Year
Teachers' BS	01202 837171	Button	Postal	£500	4.80	1/2 Year
Alliance & Leic BS	0645 228858	Instant Direct	Postal	£5,000	5.40	Year
Bristol & West BS	0800 901109	Instant Access Postal	Postal	£20,000	5.85	Year
Bristol & West BS	0800 901109	Instant Access Postal	Postal	£25,000	6.05	Year
Cheltenham & Glos	0800 717505	Direct 30	30 day P	£100	5.50	Year
Skipton BS	01756 700511	High Street Notice	30 day	£80,000	6.35	Year
National Counties BS	01372 747771	Direct 30	90 day	£2,000	6.50	Year
Leeds & Holbeck BS	0113 225 7777	Postal Bonds	20/40/90 P	£10,000	6.60	Maturity
Halifax BS	01202 502404	HICA	Instant	£2,500	5.20	Month
Chelsea BS	01422 355333	Asset Release	Instant	£10,000	4.00	Quarter
Julian Hodge Bank	0800 717515	Classic Pensions	Instant	£10,000	4.35	Year
	01222 220800	HICA	Instant	£10,000	5.25	Mid/May
Julian Hodge Bank	01222 220800	Fixed Term Deposit	1 Year	£2,000	6.75F	Maturity
Yorkshire BS	0800 378836	Fixed Rate Bond	3/3/98	£5,000	6.60F	Maturity
Woolwich BS	0800 222200	Fixed Rate Bond	2 Year	£1,000	6.75F	Year
Coventry BS	0345 665522	Fixed Rate Bond	3/3/99	£1,000	7.30F	Year
Sun Banking Corp	01488 744505	Fixed Rate TESSA	5 years	£8,575	7.50F	Year
NatWest Bank	0800 200400	Fixed Rate TESSA	5 years	£5,000	7.45F	Year
Birmingham Midshires	0645 720721	Inflation Beater	5 years	£1,000	7.00	Year
Principality BS	01222 344188		5 years	£500	6.80	Year
Julian Hodge Bank	01222 220800	Fixed Rate TESSA	5 years	£9,000	8.00F	Year
Sun Banking Corp	01488 744505	Fixed Rate TESSA	5 years	£9,000	7.50F	Year
National Counties BS	01372 747771	Fixed Rate TESSA	5 years	£9,000	7.20	Year
Birmingham Midshires	0645 720721	Inflation Beater	5 years	£1,000	7.00	Year
Premium Life	0800 838020		1 year	£10,000	5.35FN	Year
Premium Life	0800 838020		2 year	£10,000	5.90FN	Year
Premium Life	0800 838020		3 years	£10,000	5.95FN	Year
Premium Life	0800 838020		4 years	£10,000	6.05FN	Year
Premium Life	0800 838020		5 years	£10,000	6.35FN	Year
Mid-City Bank Glasgow	08 350 78168	New Access	Instant	£25,000	6.30	Year
First National Gdns Ltd	01481 710400	30 Day Notice	30 day	£10,000	6.50	Year
Portman Channel Islands	01481 882247	Fixed Interest Bond	1 Year	£500	6.50	Year
Northern Rock, Green	01481 714600	Millennium Bond	1/1/02	£10,000	7.50F	Year
Investment Accounts			1 month	£20	4.75	Year
			3 months	£500	5.25	Year
Income Bonds			6 months	£2,000	5.50	Year
Capital Bond			12 months	£25,000	6.25	Month
First Option Bonds			12 months	£100	6.50	Maturity
Pensioner's G'ted Income Bond			5 years	£100	6.50	Year
NS Certificates (box-free)			43rd issue	£100	6.50	Year
Children's Bond			5th issue limited	£100	6.50	Year
			Issue B	£100	6.50	Year
P post only	F fixed rate	N net rate	A All individuals subject to 30 days notice of interest			
All rates are shown gross and are subject to change without notice.						
Source: MONEYFACTS 01692 500577						



## loose change

Direct Line, the telephone insurer, is increasing from 50 to 65 per cent the no-claims discount available to company car drivers when they switch to a private car. Call 0181 636 2468.

Black Horse Financial Services has published a free guide to pensions which aims to highlight the dangers of underfunding for retirement. For copies call 0800 269062.

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# Mortgages with all the trimmings

Nic Cicutti looks at new ways to move house

For many homeowners, battered by a tide of extra bills in the run-up to Christmas, arranging a new mortgage is the furthest thing from their mind. For some, it is possible, however, to combine a mortgage with the chance to help pay for the festive season. For others, the opportunity to snap up one of the increasingly varied mortgages on offer should be on the "must-do-now" agenda.

Among many interesting deals this week is one from Britannia Building Society, which guarantees that if mortgage rates rise between now and September 1999, it will cut its own loan rates. The Britannia mortgage, underpinned by using specialist hedge funds, is set at 6.99 per cent. Should standard variable rates rise in the next year or so, the society's will drop by the same amount.

If, for instance, mortgage rates go up to 7.99 per cent, Britannia's new mortgage drops to 5.99 per cent. And so on to a low of 4.99 per cent, equivalent to a rise in standard rates of 8.99 per cent. Conversely, if variable rates drop, this one won't go beyond its 6.99 per cent limit.

Richard Taylor, the society's product management controller, says: "It is an attractive alternative for all those thinking of fixing their mortgage rates with a general election looming and bank rates on the increase."

Mortgage Intelligence, which represents 400 independent home loan experts throughout the country, has launched a Christmas Cashback mortgage, where a lump sum is paid to borrowers when the loan goes through. Chris Scales, head of

development at Mortgage Intelligence, says: "Back in September, we spoke to our brokers and they told us that many of our clients wanted a cashback deal."

"Our research indicated that the average extra monthly spend of a family at Christmas was about £500 to £600, so we have tried to tailor a product that will allow a 1.5 per cent cashback every year for three years to take this additional outlay into account."

The Christmas Cashback arranged through Market Harborough Building Society, has a variable rate of 6.99 per cent. On a £68,000 loan, this would mean a cheque for £1,000 dropping onto the doormat for three years. The society pays up to £300 towards remortgage costs, based on a maximum of 90 per cent of a home's value, and there are no arrangement fees. Redemption penalties are spread over five years and involve three months' interest plus repayment of the cashback. To sweeten the deal, Mortgage Intelligence promises that if an application is made reasonably ahead of Christmas, a provisional offer can be made in time to negotiate a separate short-term loan with the bank manager.

For those who prefer a plainer deal, Market Harborough also has a 2 per cent cashback paid in a one-off lump sum, plus a 2 per cent discount on the 6.99 per cent variable rate until December 1998. The offer is saddled with compulsory buildings and contents insurance, plus a £295 arrangement fee and the usual penalties. But it does include free unemployment insurance and the facility to

overpay by up to £100 each month, reducing the mortgage without penalty.

For Mark Chilton, marketing director at FirstMortgage, cashbacks are not the sweetest deal on the block. FirstMortgage, a telephone-based lender, is promoting its own 7.59 per cent mortgage, fixed for five years.

The deal might seem poor, compared to a five-year fix from Lambeth Building Society at 7.45 per cent or Bristol & West at 7.48 per cent. But Mr Chilton points out that the Lambeth deal is subject to compulsory unemployment insurance, while Bristol & West applies an annual "rest" - when the outstanding loan is recalculated - on its loans, compared to monthly "rests" with FirstMortgage.

One noticeable feature in the mortgage market is the apparent disparity between the deals available on discounted deals as compared to fixed rates. Northern Rock, for instance, offers a 2.75 per cent discount on its 6.99 per cent standard variable rate for three years, bringing the effective cost of its loan to 4.24 per cent at present.

In the run-up to Christmas, fewer people are searching for a new home. But that should not stop canny borrowers who know that they will be on the house-hunting trail in the new year. It pays to lock in now, as long as the lender is prepared to wait for draw-down on the loan to take place in a few months' time.

Mortgage Intelligence, 0800 246000; FirstMortgage, 0800 080088; Britannia, through branches.

Rosalind Russell uncovers three of the best seaside properties



Harbour View in Polperro, Cornwall, is as close to the sea as you can get without living in a boat. The four-bedroom Grade II listed house has views across the harbour and village, both of which can be busy in high season. The sitting room has a beamed ceiling and some rooms are irregularly shaped. If you need parking, it will take 9 space outside the village. £125,000 through Black Horse Alder King in Falmouth (01363 222771).

The Lodge, a 19th-century four-bedroom house near Salcombe, overlooks the Menai Straits to Snowdonia. The tenemented garden with steps to the sea, spiral staircase to the floors, some of which have exposed stone walls. The dining and sitting rooms have French doors to the garden and balcony, with views across the sea. £295,000 through Jackson-Stops in Chester (01244 328361) and John Berry in Beaumaris (01248 810100).

A semi-detached period cottage at Hope Cove, five miles from Salcombe, is just 50 yards from the beach and not much further to two pubs in the village. Vilebrequin's roof was probably originally thatched, but is now slate and some restoration work is needed. With two bedrooms and a beamed sitting room, it's for sale through Marchand Petit in Kingsbridge (01546 857588) for £79,500.

**'There are only two conclusions any sensible investor can draw. Either gilts are too cheap, or Italian and Spanish yields are too low'**

Jonathan Davis

One of the enduring fascinations of financial markets is that they periodically take leave of their senses and, for seemingly plausible reasons, completely misprice the securities which are traded on them. It is at such moments that the smartest investors step in to profit from this collective myopia. Those who can see the woods for the trees start behaving, in the words of the US investor Warren Buffett, like "an over-sexed man in a harem".

Are we seeing such a moment of market madness in the European bond market? For months now, the price of these bonds has been driven by the market's perceptions of what was going to happen with Economic and Monetary Union. A year ago, the consensus view in the markets was that EMU was dead in the water. Few investors believed there was a realistic chance of even the core European countries of Germany and France being ready to meet the scheduled starting date of January 1999.

As long as that view prevailed, the markets continued to price government bonds on the basis of traditional bond market investment criteria - the outlook for inflation, the strength of the currency, and the state of the economic cycle, among others. As these very significantly across Europe, the spread between the yield on bonds issued by the best regarded economy (Germany) and that on bonds from the relative basket cases (high-inflation countries such as Italy and Spain) was a wide one. As befits a country that has built its post-war economy on the back of an unshakable belief in preserving the value of the Deutsche mark, Germany has always been able to borrow money more cheaply than anyone else in Europe.

A year on and the whole picture has turned on its head. The consensus has swung round to the belief that monetary union will go ahead on time after all. Britain will not be at the starting gate, but the so-called Club Med countries (Italy and Spain) will - so the markets have convinced themselves - have a good chance of joining the Germans, French and Benelux countries.

The result of this volte-face has been a dramatic convergence in yield on relative yields on bonds issued by the likely entrants. Although German bonds still offer the lowest yields, the margin with everyone else's has narrowed sharply. A 10-year German bond is now around 5.85 per cent, with French bonds of the same maturity at an almost identical level. You can now buy Italian government bonds on a yield of 7.6 per cent and Spanish bonds on a yield of 7.25 per cent.

The differential between German and Club Med countries has fallen, in other words, to well below 2 per cent. Yet less than a year ago it was more than twice as large - 4 per cent to 5 per cent. Two years ago Italian bonds were priced well into double figures - 6 per cent more than German bonds. That

was the price investors paid for the fact that Italian public finances are among the worst anywhere in Europe.

The whole point of monetary union is to tie the fortunes of all the main European countries to a single currency, forcing the weaker members to swallow the same monetary medicine as the Germans. Once monetary union occurs, devaluation will no longer be an option for the Italians or the Spaniards, and in those circumstances it makes sense for the differential with German bond yields to narrow towards vanishing point.

But the speed and pace at which the markets have moved this year is a surprise. Monetary union is still over two years away. The Bundesbank, the German central bank, is fighting a rearguard action to make sure that the tough entry criteria laid down at Maastricht on budget deficits, inflation and the level of public debt are not budged by the weaker countries. The markets' assumption that the project will go ahead with Spain and Italy aboard is not the foregone conclusion that their bond prices imply.

When you look further afield, the anomalies are even more striking. As nobody now assumes that Britain will join the single currency, the price of our government bonds (gilts) has not been affected by the convergence elsewhere. In fact, gilt yields are now virtually the highest in Europe. For the first time in years, a UK Chancellor is paying a higher rate of interest on government debt (around 7.5 per cent) than the Spanish or Italian finance ministers.

This is absurd, given respective inflation records. True, the British economy operates on a different economic cycle from the rest of Europe. It has been growing steadily for three years while most of Europe is still in the downturn phase. You would expect interest rates to be relatively lower on the other side of the Channel at this stage in the cycle. It is true also that Britain's long-term economic performance is not much to shout about: sterling has depreciated steadily against the mark for 25 years.

But even so, there are only two conclusions any sensible investor can draw. Either gilts are too cheap, or Italian and Spanish yields are too low.

Interest will be payable net of the lower rate of income tax (currently 20%), or subject to the required certification, gross. Where the tax deducted exceeds an investor's tax liability (if any), a claim may be made to the Inland Revenue for repayment of tax. For individuals whose income falls within the lower or basic tax bands, the tax deducted will match their liability to tax on the interest and they will have no more tax to pay on it. Individuals who are liable at the higher rate of income tax of 40% will have to pay additional tax on the interest to cover the difference between the tax deducted and the higher tax rate due. Rates are fixed for 3 years/2 years/1 year. Specified from the date the account is opened. Interest will be calculated daily, on the day of receipt in the case of a deposit or from the date the account is opened. Interest will be paid monthly by cheque. Proof of identity may be required. For the 2 year Fixed Rate Bond, no withdrawals are permitted during the 2 year term. For the 5 year Fixed Rate Bond, no withdrawals are permitted during the first 2 years of the term, but on or after the 2nd anniversary of the date the account is opened withdrawals are permitted subject to 90 days' interest penalty on the amount withdrawn. If a withdrawal is made, the stated interest rate will not be achieved. Additional investments are permitted only while this issue of the Bond is still on offer. Full terms and conditions available on request from any Woolwich branch. Woolwich Building Society, Corporate HQ, Walling Street, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 7RR.

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# Catchment area is all ...

# Seeking a house near a good school? Penny Jackson advises

There is nothing like a discussion about schools to fire a gathering of parents. No matter if the children are three or 13, the choices seem hard. But whether driven by pragmatism or by principle, people agree on one thing: where you live matters. Not surprisingly, the annual Schools League Table, published this week, has become a Bible for the house hunting family.

Among those poring over it are parents who have always promised themselves a move out of the city. If we lived in the country, they say, we wouldn't have to pay for private schools. But some of those who have taken the plunge recently have found the dream team of free education and the perfect country house somewhat elusive. In areas where the state schools are excellent, parents who blithely inform an estate agent of their plans to live in a

North of London, Bedfordshire's education system is the envy of the fee-paying parent. In certain areas it is the comprehensive schools that provide the pull. In the pretty Georgian market town of Ampthill, Nigel Croft, the headteacher of Redborne Upper School, is used to parents producing, with a flourish, the exact distance between home and school. Nor is it unusual to find "wanted" notices for houses in the area. "We try to match demand by expanding," he says, "but we cannot guarantee a place unless a child lives in the catchment area, although we haven't as yet turned people away."

In Ampthill, Tony Inskip, of Country Properties, has noticed that the school

league tables have led to a greater demand for property in the area. "There is a waiting list for houses in the unspoilt villages and you would expect to pay about £200,000 for a substantial family house." The Georgian houses in Ampthill rarely change hands, though. Meanwhile, north of Bedford, in the village of Sharnbrook, Sharnbrook Upper School has received Ofsted's highest accolade and is regarded as a competitor to the highly selective private schools.

Price is not the main stumbling-block for those wanting to move to Kent. When Ros Smith left south-west London for the garden county and told agents she was looking for a house in the catchment area of Cranbrook School, a grant-maintained co-ed grammar school with boarding places, she was not given much cause for hope. "I could see them thinking, 'oh, here comes another one'." Once the Smiths' 13-year-old son was accepted at the school, they decided to rent. "We now know that house prices are about 10 to 15 per cent higher in the catchment area and there are a lot of agents chasing the same

there are a lot of agents chasing the same properties. Some people spend more than a year looking for the right house, which is depressing," says Mrs Smith.

The Smiths are part of a continuous stream of families leaving London, many

of them drawn to Cranbrook by word of mouth. Local estate agent Oliver Fisher refers to it as "the dinner party circuit". "The local schooling has a good reputation across the sectors. The problem is, our supply of property is down 50 per cent on last year. People come down here with the ideal in mind of a quiet country house within striking distance of the school, and these are few and far between. One such couple eventually bought a modern house on a busy road, specifically to get into the catchment area." But even though people are frustrated by the house famine, particularly in the £180,000 to £350,000 bracket, they are not throwing caution to the winds.

ket for £255,000. We have had enormous interest in it. It is not yet sold, but we do have an offer on it." The half-a-million-plus market, he went on to say, is stronger than at any time in the past five years, but while buyers are prepared to make small compromises, they will not spend £600,000 for a house on a main road. "They want a copper-bottomed investment with easy rail communications. This could be the family home for the next 20 years, and no one wants to make a mistake."

Indeed, compromise is something most newcomers to the Cranbrook area are familiar with. "When we bought two years ago, our house was described as 'very tired,'" says Catherine Scales. "We compromised on its condition and on the noise, but there again we needed to be on a bus route. A house for the same price in London would be meticulously decorated. We were definitely buying the lifestyle."

Meanwhile, Hilary Dickson, who snapped up her house privately, tries to block out the thundering traffic with huge hedges. "That is not what we planned when we moved to the country. The school prompted us here."

The school propelled us here." Cranbrook has a strict seven-mile catchment area for its day pupils. "A few sixth-formers have even been bought cottages by their parents," says Mrs Dickson. "Before we had moved in completely, we had to prove we were committed to buying here."



Redborne Upper School (top) in the Georgian market town of Ampthill (above): school league tables have led to a greater demand for property in the area, according to local estate agents?

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